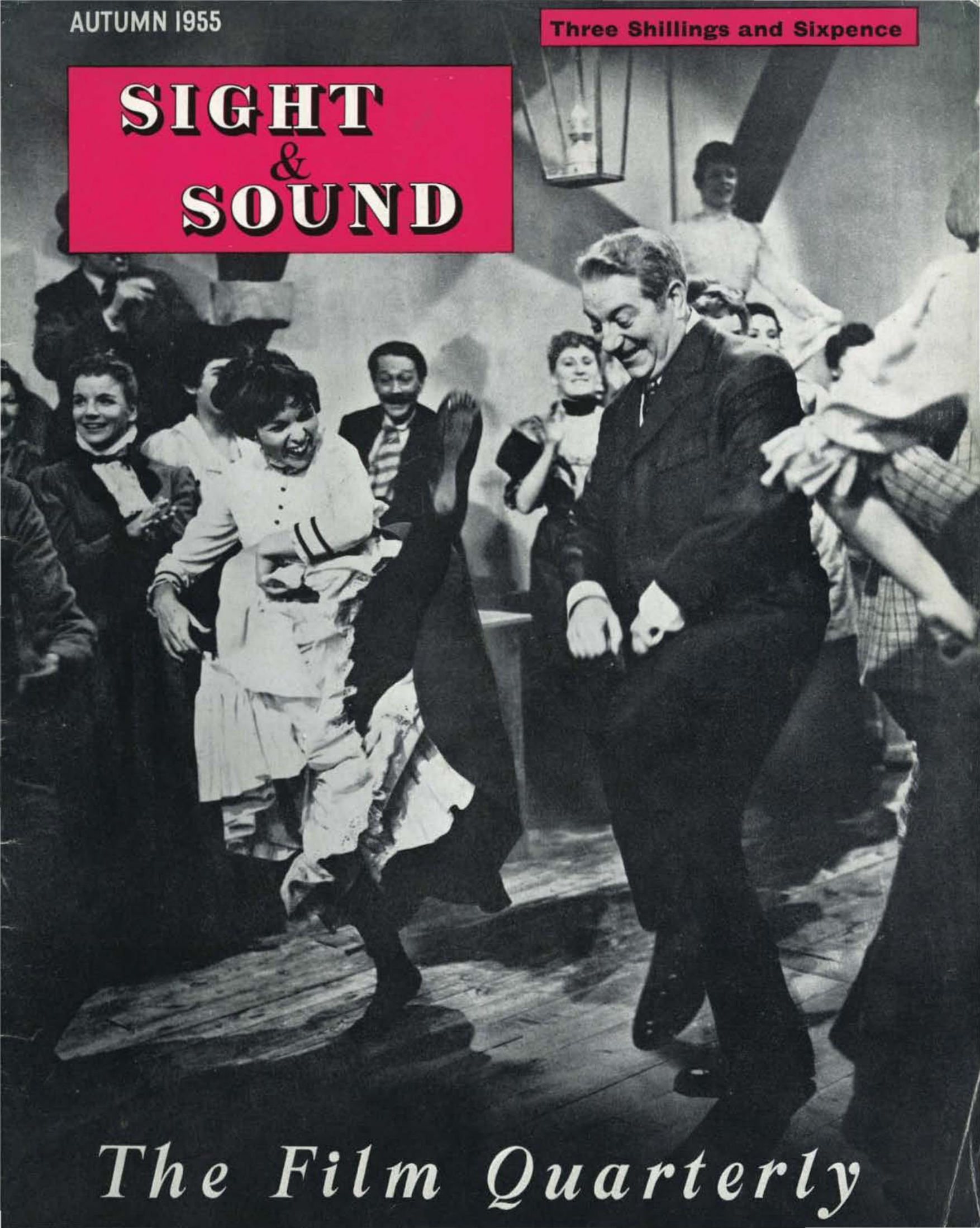


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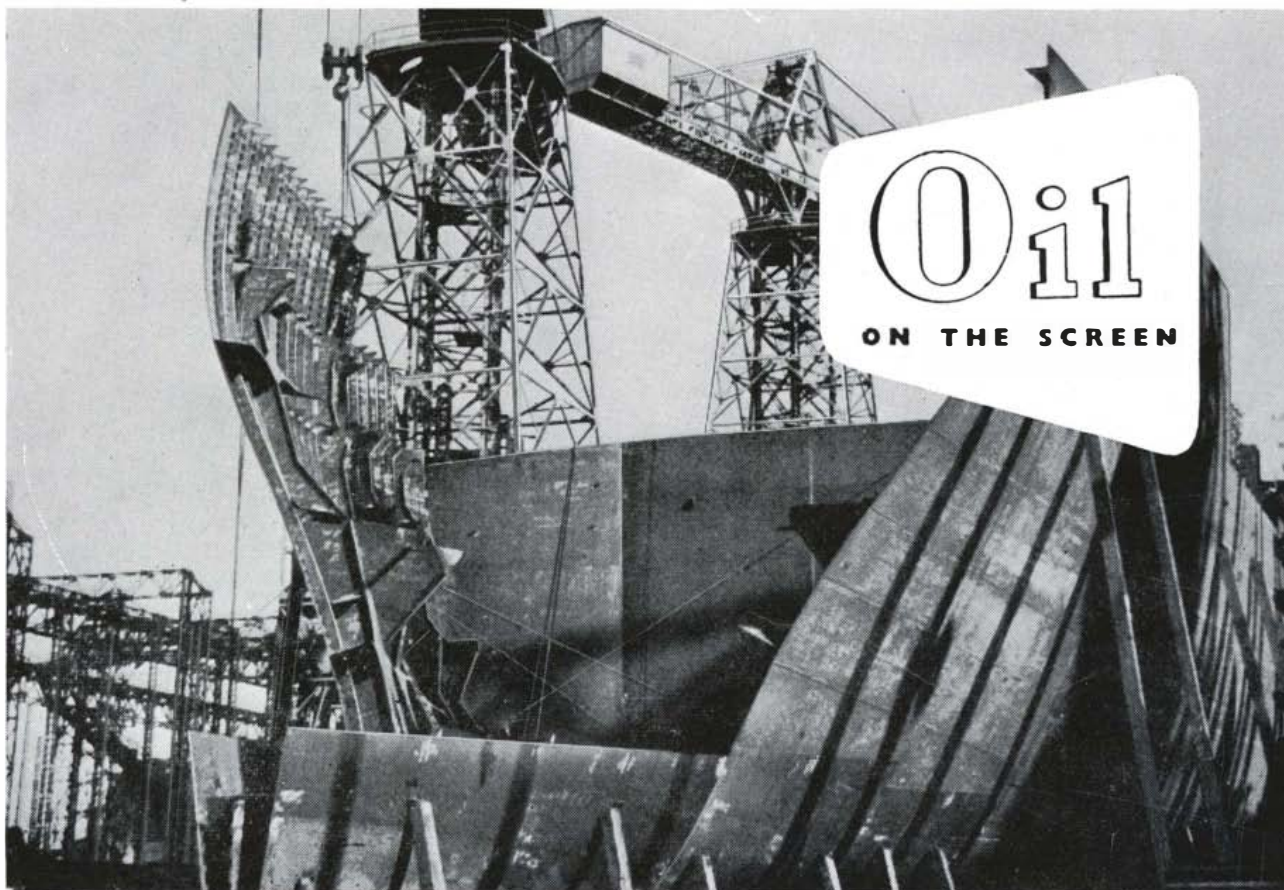
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*The Film Quarterly*





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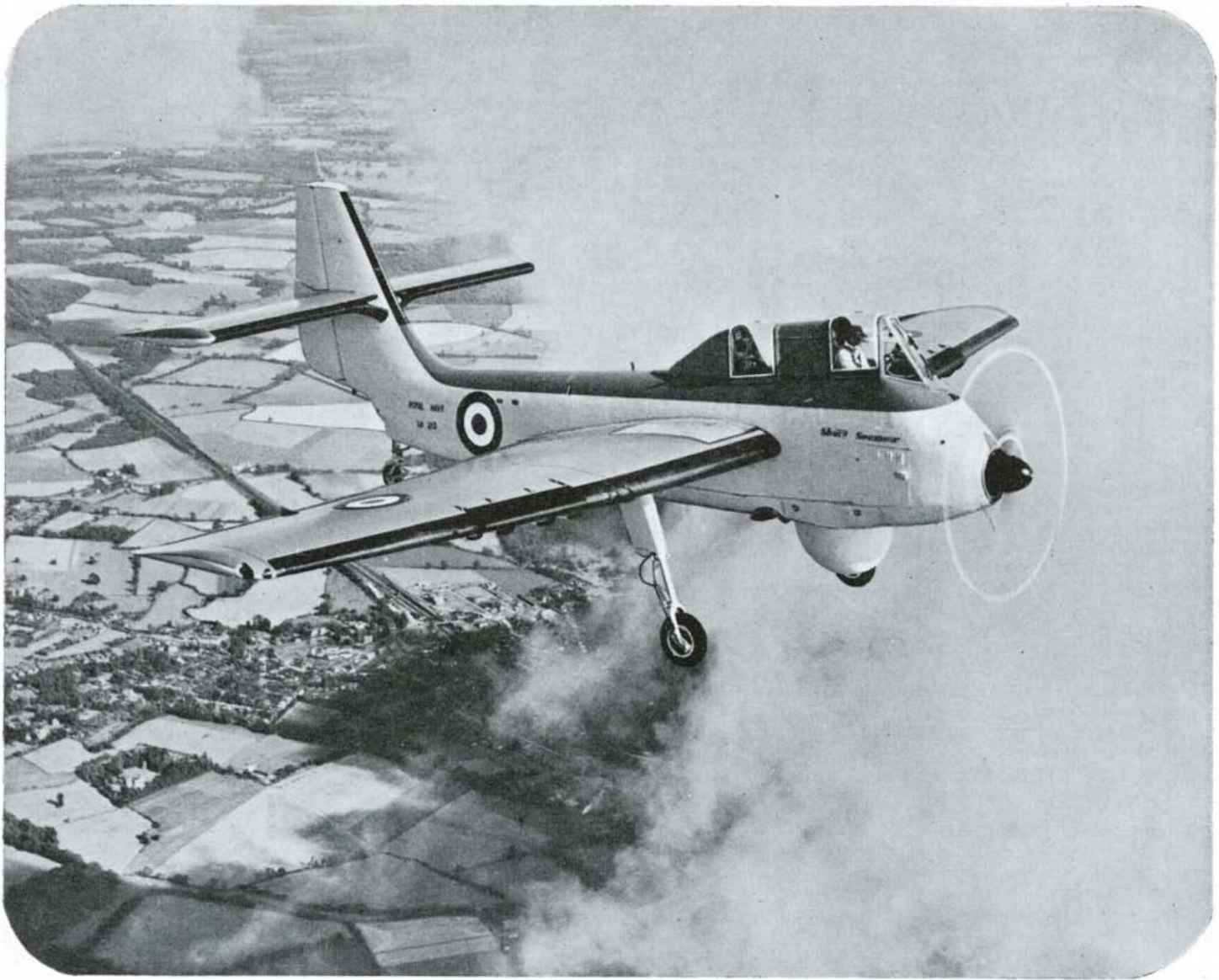
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# SIGHT AND SOUND

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# THE FRONT PAGE

THE season of films directed by John Ford now in progress at the National Film Theatre illuminates not only the achievements of a remarkable artist but the uniqueness, in professional terms, of his whole career. It is extraordinary to think that Ford arrived in Hollywood in 1913, the year that Griffith began *The Birth of a Nation*—and that, forty years later, he had just made two of his most personal films, *The Quiet Man* and *The Sun Shines Bright*.

A great number of talented people have worked in Hollywood, but few of the greatest talents have stayed the course for anything like the whole of their lives. After fifteen years the strain had begun to show in Griffith, and when his first two sound films failed he was doomed to a lonely neglect; von Stroheim survived for an equal period, and was then forced to confine himself to acting; King Vidor has gone on, but it is sad to compare his later films with his earlier ones. Of that first generation of Hollywood film-makers, in fact, only Chaplin managed to resist both personal lassitude and commercial antagonism—and he, of course, has now left America.

Which leaves Ford, at the age of 60, with more than 120 films to his credit. Nearly half this considerable number is accounted for by the years up to 1923, when he was making seven or eight westerns annually, each shot in a week or two; but, even without these, the output would still be prodigious, because Ford's method as a film-maker has been to achieve occasional personal freedom at the expense of accepting a great many routine assignments. He has won Hollywood's confidence, in fact, as a professional—but without, in contrast to so many others, corrupting himself.

From one point of view this personal solution seems particularly apt. As a director Ford has always been an isolated figure, creating his own climate, fashionably praised for some over-estimated films (*The Informer*, *The Long Voyage Home*), fashionably scorned for some under-estimated ones (*Young Mr. Lincoln*, *They Were Expendable*, *My Darling Clementine*). He has seemed even more isolated in the postwar years, when the accent has been on films that either stem directly from contemporary reality, or wear their style with an obtrusive difference. (Significant that nowadays *The Grapes of Wrath* remains Ford's most generally accepted masterpiece.) Not only have many of his films been set in the past—a cherished corner of the American past, its customs and ceremonies indefatigably revived and celebrated—but the values in his best work are derived from that past. The stories of transition and expansion in the American West, with their delight in heroic adventure, traditional pleasures, simple loyalties, and their lively optimism, communicate these values directly; but they are no less strongly there in the wandering family of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the neglected inhabitants of *Tobacco Road*, the lost squadron of *They*

*Were Expendable*, the Irish villagers of *The Quiet Man*. In these films too a pioneer community is created, and the sentiment, the allegiances behind them, have the breadth and confidence of the tales of early adventure.

No doubt because these values are grounded in a vanished past, Ford has been called old-fashioned. Yet this seems an odd distortion of judgment, that fails to distinguish between what is dead and what is living in the past. ("People are often inclined to disparage poetry which appears to have no bearing on the situation of today," T. S. Eliot wrote; "but they are always inclined to ignore that which appears to bear only on the situation of yesterday. . . . The question is not what is ephemeral, but what is permanent: a poet who appears to be wholly out of touch with his age may still have something very important to say to it.") In fact, an ostensibly "modern" picture of the past such as *East of Eden* is far more old-fashioned than, say, *The Sun Shines Bright*. In Kazan's case, a few patterns of contemporary behaviourism and psychology are imposed on a community of forty years ago, with the result that its drama seems merely to be happening in fancy dress; in Ford's case, there are traditions and beliefs in the past that he loves, and that his films about it maintain and reanimate.

In his most recent films (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Wagonmaster*, *The Quiet Man*, *The Sun Shines Bright*) Ford is perhaps nearest to another isolated master, Jean Renoir, who in a story of 20th century India, 17th century Peru or *fin-de-siècle* Paris reveals his preoccupation with a persisting view of the human condition, and whose indifference to conventional narrative structure has also been reproached. In truth the atmospheric continuity of *The River* or of *French Can-Can* is an original and daring achievement; and the effect of Ford's *Wagonmaster*, parts of which seem like a series of epic images set to music, and of *The Sun Shines Bright*, with its loosely connected sketches and impressions, is very similar. In each case one sees a personal imagination spreading itself, and the sweeping vision of the whole is large enough to contain the moments of carelessness.

For, more than anything else now, John Ford's films can be seen to record the persistence of a vision, of a belief in human solidarities. It is a vision that manifests itself in images of faces and people and landscapes that often seem mysteriously linked: the face of the young Lincoln, earnest, meditative, determined, ancestor of a line of Ford heroes who combine qualities of toughness and gentleness, shyness and impulse, quiet and daring, and share a moral purpose, a love of justice; the old man who refuses to leave when the Japanese are approaching and calmly settles himself on his front steps, and Ada's derelict husband who watches the leaves blowing down the road from his porch; the traditional dance at the Western post and in the Irish village; the patrol winding across the desert and the squadron stranded on the Pacific island. . . . It is from such constant intimations that a poet's world grows and spreads before our eyes.

Opposite: an image from the past. John Wayne in "Rio Grande" (1950)

# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

**ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS (JARFID)** A new England widow wins through to marry the gardener's son in spite of social objections from friends and children. See this with someone you love very much. (Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Agnes Moorehead; director, Douglas Sirk. Technicolor.)

**BATTLE CRY (Warners)** Mainly a wolf call. Inordinate footage is dedicated to the sex lives of a marine corps that finally goes into action at Saipan. (Aldo Ray, Van Heflin, Dorothy Malone, Nancy Olson; director, Raoul Walsh. CinemaScope and WarnerColor.)

**\*\*CAMILLE (M.G.M.)** Garbo in her most classic part. George Cukor's sympathetic direction ensures that the vehicle is worthy of the actress. (Robert Taylor, Laura Hope Crews, Lionel Barrymore. 1936.)

**CAST A DARK SHADOW (Eros)** Psychopathic wife-murderer meets his match in a brassily cheerful retired barmaid. Average melodrama from a West End play. (Dirk Bogarde, Margaret Lockwood, Kathleen Harrison; director, Lewis Gilbert.)

**\*\*CONFIDENTIAL REPORT (Warners)** Orson Welles' melodrama about a mysterious Kane-like financier who hires a young American crook to investigate his own past. Much bravura technical display, some fine performances, but a disappointing lack of substance. *Reviewed.* (Orson Welles, Michael Redgrave, Katina Paxino. )

**DEEP BLUE SEA, THE (Fox)** Vivien Leigh fails to make anything convincing of the unhappy Hester Collyer, who leaves her rich husband for a charming but evasive lover, in this somewhat overblown adaptation. Kenneth More excellent. *Reviewed.* (Eric Portman, Emyl Williams; director, Anatole Litvak. CinemaScope and Eastman Colour.)

**\*EAST OF EDEN (Warners)** An episode from Steinbeck's novel about two rival brothers in a Californian family forty years ago: heavy Biblical parallels and persistent over-direction by Elia Kazan. (James Dean, Julie Harris, Raymond Massey. CinemaScope and WarnerColor.)

**\*\*\*FRENCH CAN-CAN (Miracle)** Jean Renoir celebrates his return to the French studios with a superb evocation of Paris in the *café concert* period. Exquisite atmosphere and colour, some characteristic reflections on theatre and life. *Reviewed.* (Jean Gabin, Françoise Arnoul, Maria Felix. Technicolor.)

**GEORDIE (British Lion)** An athletic highland innocent is persuaded to take part in the Olympic Games, though he would rather remain a gamekeeper. Unsubtle treatment loses the opportunity for an attractive comic fable. (Bill Travers, Alastair Sim, Norah Gersen; director, Frank Launder. Technicolor.)

**GLASS SLIPPER, THE (M.G.M.)** A new version of the Cinderella tale, with psycho-analytical and dream ballet interludes. Estelle Winwood makes an engagingly original fairy godmother, but the rest is somewhat unrewardingly whimsical. (Leslie Caron, Michael Wilding; director, Charles Walters, Eastman Colour.)

**HOUSE OF BAMBOO (Fox)** American racketeers in Tokyo; fascinating if incongruous Japanese backgrounds to some formula thick-car intrigues. (Robert Ryan, Robert Stack, Shirley Yamaguchi; director, Samuel Fuller. CinemaScope and De Luxe Color.)

**\*I AM A CAMERA (Independent)** Christopher Isherwood's Sally Bowles arrives on the screen by the regrettable detour of Van Druten's play. General atmosphere, and Julie Harris's performance, too synthetic. (Laurence Harvey, Shelley Winters; director, Henry Cornelius.)

**KING'S THIEF, THE (M.G.M.)** Rather spiritless Restoration swashbuckler, in which a gallant highwayman foils a plot against the throne. (Edmund Purdom, Ann Blyth, David Niven; director, Robert Z. Leonard. CinemaScope and Eastman Colour.)

**\*LADY AND THE TRAMP (Disney)** Disney's first cartoon feature in CinemaScope, about the adventures of a spaniel puppy and the mongrel who befriends her. A few imaginative flashes, though the going generally is sticky. (Directors, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson. Technicolor.)

**\*LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME (M.G.M.)** Some nostalgic numbers and enjoyably aggressive playing by James Cagney in a slick biography of 'twenties torch singer Ruth Etting and her marriage to a retired gangster with a stormy temper. (Doris Day, Cameron Mitchell; director, Charles Vidor. CinemaScope and Eastman Colour.)

**LUCY GALLANT (Paramount)** Businesswoman heroine wavers between running the smartest dress shop in Texas and marriage to a rancher who has struck oil. Decision delayed but predictable. (Jane Wyman, Charlton Heston, Claire Trevor; director, Robert Parrish. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**MAN FROM LARAMIE, THE (Columbia)** The stranger from Laramie comes up against the local cattle king and his neurotic son: competent Western with some psychiatric sharpshooting. (James Stewart, Arthur Kennedy, Donald Crisp; director, Anthony Mann. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

**\*MARTIN LUTHER (British Lion)** A conscientious biography of the famous theologian, solid and detailed but lacking in imaginative vitality. (Niall MacGinnis, Guy Vernon, David Horne; director, Irving Pichel.)

**\*MY SISTER EILEEN (Columbia)** Musical version of the comedy about two sisters from Ohio and their basement existence in Greenwich Village. Atmosphere erratic, but some numbers have great charm and vitality. *Reviewed.* (Betty Garrett, Janet Leigh, Jack Lemmon; director, Richard Quine. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

**\*NIGHT HOLDS TERROR, THE (Columbia)** Taut, workmanlike little melodrama about a family held prisoner in their home by gunmen. (Jack Kelly, Hildy Parks, Vince Edwards; director, Andrew Stone.)

**\*QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT, THE (Exclusive)** Lively British science-fiction nerve-stretcher, from a TV serial: man-into-monster story, with chases around London and final electrocution of the Thing in Westminster Abbey. (Brian Donlevy, Jack Warner, Margia Dean; director, Val Guest.)

**\*\*RIFI (Miracle)** Inventively made and entertaining French underworld thriller, directed by Jules Dassin. Excellent Paris locations and clever 30-minute robbery sequence without a word spoken. *Reviewed.* (Jean Servais, Carl Mohner, Jules Dassin.)

**\*SEVEN YEAR ITCH, THE (Fox)** An amiable performance by Tom Ewell, and some dry New Yorkerish humour, in screen version of the George Axelrod comedy about a middle-aged publisher whose imagination is seriously ravaged after an encounter with the blonde from the upstairs flat. (Marilyn Monroe; director, Billy Wilder. CinemaScope and De Luxe Color.)

**SOLDIER OF FORTUNE (Fox)** Adventurer Clark Gable raids Communist China to rescue an American photographer from brain-washing in a Canton jail; spurious melodrama with Hong Kong handsome in CinemaScope. (Susan Hayward, Michael Rennie; director, Edward Dmytryk. CinemaScope and De Luxe Color.)

**\*\*SUMMER MADNESS (Independent)** A nervous American spinster has a brief encounter in Venice on her first holiday in Europe. David Lean's film takes the edge off Arthur Laurents' play, but there are compensations in the brilliance of Katharine Hepburn and some rich locations. *Reviewed.* (Rossano Brazzi, Isa Miranda. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*THIS IS CINERAMA (Cinerama Productions)** The biggest of all the big screens, and as a stunt undoubtedly the best. Plenty of impressive *trompe l'oeil*, and a highly effective airplane tour of the U.S.A. (Producers, Lowell Thomas and Merian C. Cooper. Print by Technicolor.)

**\*THOUSANDS CHEER (M.G.M.)** Reissue of a medium musical, with indifferent plot, all-star cast; some good numbers by Gene Kelly and Judy Garland, some poor ones by Kathryn Grayson, and an excellent performance by Mary Astor. (Director, George Sidney. 1943.)

**ULYSSES (Archway)** Homer sketchily telescoped and modernised, with little flair for spectacle or adventure. (Kirk Douglas, Silvana Mangano, Anthony Quinn; director, Mario Camerini. Technicolor.)

**VALUE FOR MONEY (JARFID)** John Gregson in rather puddingy comedy of tight-fisted Yorkshireman oscillating between London gold-digger and wistful home town girl. Ernest Thesiger briefly splendid as a decayed aristocrat. (Diana Dors, Susan Stephen; director, Ken Annakin. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**WOMAN FOR JOE, THE (JARFID)** Fairground triangle of manager, blonde and midget. A subject with possibilities that limp and sentimental treatment fails to realise. (Diane Cilento, George Baker, Jimmy Karoubi; director, George More O'Ferrall. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG (Paramount)** Jerry Lewis, pursued by a homicidal jewel thief, poses as a twelve-year old schoolboy. Ginger Rogers was much funnier in this comedy when it was called *The Major and the Minor*. (Dean Martin, Diana Lynn, Nina Foch; director, Norman Taurog. VistaVision and Technicolor.)



# In the Picture

## The Small Screen

The era of commercial television has begun, with two main companies—Associated Broadcasting and Associated Rediffusion—now transmitting regular programmes. (The Granada Group is not due to begin transmission until April, 1956.) Its presence, of course, has been felt in a variety of ways for some time: greatly increased employment of film technicians everywhere, programmes being filmed at Shepperton and Nettlefold, other studios (Riverside, Viking, Wembley) turned over to TV transmission, and news of studios being built at Barnes and Clapham Park. Some idea of the extent of all these activities can be gauged from the fact that there are now sixty British companies producing television films, from spots to features, including a number of well established firms, such as Associated British-Pathé, World Wide and Basic.

Also, a formidable amount of stage and film acting talent has been signed up. Associated Rediffusion's first television film inaugurating a series of famous plays was Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, directed by Robert Hamer and starring Margaret Leighton, Michael Gough and Laurence Harvey. The whole standard of this production was unusually high. Associated Rediffusion, which has established its own training scheme for technicians, has also acquired the rights of the popular American show *Dragnet*, is sponsoring concerts conducted by Barbirolli, a series called "Round the World with Orson Welles" and variety and musical programmes, devised by Jack Hylton, employing talent from the London theatre. Associated Broadcasting also has a series of filmed plays, beginning with Shaw's *Man of Destiny*, starring James Donald and Elisabeth Sellars; various features including "Shopping with Elizabeth Allan" and "Sunday Afternoon," described as a "provocative magazine programme" with contributions by Dame Edith Sitwell, Ludovic Kennedy, debutante Penny Knowles and Tom Driberg; has signed up Billy Graham, and acquired the rights of another



A place in the sun: director Robert Rossen and star Richard Burton between scenes on location in Spain for "Alexander the Great".

successful American show, *I Love Lucy*. Both companies have also acquired the rights of popular films—Associated Broadcasting those of Roy Rogers, Associated Rediffusion those of Hopalong Cassidy. All this before the other two companies which comprise the quartet of commercial television in Britain, and the B.B.C.'s alternative service, have begun transmission.

## Bunuel in London

One of the most important programmes in the history of the National Film Theatre has been its season devoted to Luis Bunuel, whose work—from the astonishing 25-year-old *L'Age d'Or*, which retains all its wrath and satire, to *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, his last film made in Mexico—was seen for the first time in full perspective. This revelation of a unique and powerful temperament was completed by Bunuel's visit to London for the showing of *Archibaldo*, which he introduced to the audience as a "comédie noire." Attuned by this time to the 'dark' humour as well as the savage seriousness of the director, the audience responded magnificently. In spite of what one might have thought to be a wide gulf in national temperaments, both aspects of this macabre work—the disturbing and the absurd—were received with alert, anarchistic sympathy. Although *Archibaldo* has certain affinities in tone as well as in subject with *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, this reaction perhaps indicates less an English partiality for the comic treatment of violent death than a direct response to Bunuel as a non-compromising artist standing squarely behind every scene he shoots, and to the consequent authority which states "this is how I see it, and for me there is no other way."

Luis Bunuel is now in France, where he has just completed shooting a film with a Corsican setting, *Cela s'appelle l'Aurore*. Early in 1956 he will return to make a version of Pierre Louys' *La Femme et le Pantin*, a subject of exciting potentialities.

Melina Mercori, with Georges Founfas, in Michael Yannis' Greek film, "Stella", to be seen here later this year.





Michael Kidd, Gene Kelly and Dan Dailey in a dance number from the new musical, "There's Always Fair Weather", directed by Kelly and Stanley Donen. Other players are Cyd Charisse and Dolores Gray.

### All Summer in a Day

Under the title, *300 Ans de Cinématographie, 60 Ans de Cinéma*, an exhibition dedicated to the seventh art is now on view in Paris at the Musée de l'Art Moderne. Organised by the Cinémathèque Française, conceived by Henri Langlois, this is a fascinating and gloriously fetishistic display of the world of the cinema—less an exhibition than an evocation, in which posters, stills, models, designs, costumes, scripts and all kinds of personal documents are magically arranged.

This rich, exquisite assortment, from seventeenth century Javanese shadow-play figures to an art director's sketch for *Miracolo a Milano*, is unexhausted after several visits, leaving behind idiosyncratic memories each time. The shrines devoted to legends—Asta Nielsen, with her own striking self-portrait; Garbo, with a costume from *Gosta Berling*; Stroheim, with his incredibly detailed instructions for the military parade in *The Wedding March* and a superb Modigliani-ish poster for *Foolish Wives*; Chaplin's *City Lights* costume; Vigo, with a page from the script

("Monsieur le directeur, je vous dis merde!") from *Zéro de Conduite*; Meerson's model of the Flemish village for *La Kermesse Heroïque*; a series of "audience reaction" postcards after a Hollywood preview of *You Only Live Once*; a huge still, placed high and seen in sudden perspective, from the last shot of *Young Mr. Lincoln*; a sketch for *Henry V* and for the forest scenes of *As You Like It*; a letter from Pudovkin and the offer of a new contract from Famous Players to Gloria Swanson. . . .

This is the kind of world in which addicts will want to wander for hours, and it is good news that there are plans to bring it to London early in 1956.

### Dovzhenko at 60

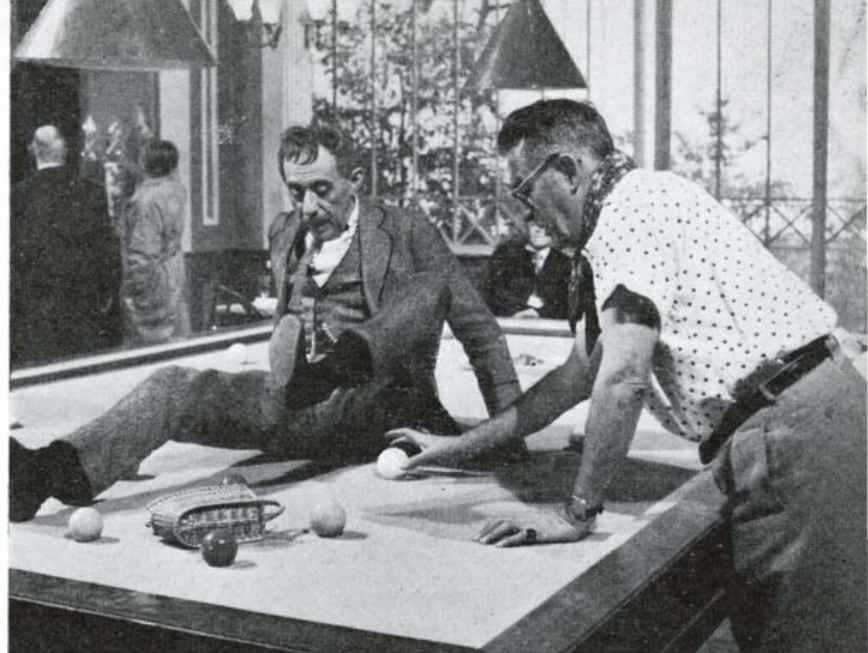
The greatest surviving member of the first generation of Soviet film-makers, Alexander Dovzhenko—whose *Arsenal*, *Earth*, *Aerograd* and *Schors* revealed a uniquely poetic, sometimes visionary artist—recently celebrated his sixtieth birthday and his thirtieth in the cinema.

Dovzhenko, who has not directed a film for some years (his last work was

as producer of *Michurin* in 1948), is now at work on three projects, the first of which, *Kakhovka*, has now begun shooting. This film, dedicated to "the workers and engineers on the Kakhovka Sea," is the story of the creation of an artificial sea in the southern steppes of the Ukraine. "The old bed of the Dnieper," Dovzhenko explained in an interview in *Sovietskaya Kultura*, "will be covered once and for all at Novaya Kakhovka. Between Zaporozhye and Kakhovka there will be a broad new sea in the dusty steppe. Our beautiful South will change beyond recognition. . . . Hitherto the entire Volga-Don and southern Ukraine region has been at the mercy of the dry winds sweeping unchecked from the east right through to Moldavia and Hungary. Only collective planned effort in a great socialist society can stay the encroachment of the desert. . . . This year, too, I shall finish editing my film scripts in book form, from *Arsenal* to *Kakhovka*. I am also preparing a script for Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, and I have begun a science-fiction story, *In the Depths of the Cosmos*, about three Soviet engineers flying to other planets and returning to Earth."



# Herr Puntila and his servant Matti



At the Rosenhugel studios in Vienna—where the French director Louis Daquin recently made *Bel Ami* and the Italian Giuseppe de Santis is now shooting a new film—Cavalcanti (seen above, right, directing a scene) has just finished his version of Berthold Brecht's comedy, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*.

The cosmopolitan tradition is maintained in this film, for the art director is the Danish Erik Aaes (who designed *Day of Wrath*), the cameraman, André Bac, is French, the music is by Hanns Eisler, and the part of Puntila is played by Curt Bois (centre), an actor seen in supporting roles in American films since 1937.

In Brecht's comedy, Herr Puntila is a rich landowner who (like Chaplin's millionaire in *City Lights*) is more genial drunk than sober. His patient servant Matti is constantly obliged to pacify girls proposed to, and friends invited to parties, when the master is in his cups.





## RKO

The sale last July of RKO-Radio Pictures brought to an end the brief period—it lasted something over a year—in which Howard Hughes was virtually, to quote *Variety*, “the only individual ever to have as his personal property a major film corporation.” The purchasers were General Teleradio Inc., a subsidiary of the General Tire and Rubber Company, the price was \$25,000,000, and the new chairman of the board of RKO-Radio Pictures (the production and distribution organisation of the RKO group of companies) is Thomas O’Neil, president of General Teleradio and of the Mutual Broadcasting System. Howard Hughes’ own authority over RKO dates from 1948, when he acquired a controlling interest in the company—an action which, according to an article in *Look*, “he since has unceasingly regretted.” Production fell off; losses during the year 1950 were estimated at some \$3,500,000; and during 1952-53 there was a period of seven months in which only one picture was produced by the company. It was at that time that Hughes sold his controlling interest to a syndicate headed by two Chicago businessmen. But “unfavourable publicity” about their previous business interests—triggered off by articles in the *Wall Street Journal*—made it difficult for them to operate the company, and the stock was returned to Hughes. A year later, early in 1954, Hughes bought out other stockholders to acquire full ownership of the company.

The chequered history of RKO during these seven years marks an exception to the principle that everything which this extraordinary tycoon touches habitually prospers. His interests range from a tool company making oil drilling equipment, by way of an aircraft factory and the TWA airline, to a flourishing brewery. As an airman he set up (in 1938) a speed record for a round the world flight. He has found time personally to discover, in Jean Harlow and Jane Russell, two phenomenally successful box-office stars; and to film, in *Hell’s Angels*, what has been called “perhaps the closest thing to a one-man picture ever made in Hollywood.” He was producing films in the silent period, was responsible for *Scarface* and *The Front Page*, and reputedly had upwards of 85 miles of film shot before he was satisfied with *The Outlaw*. He also at one time shut down all production at RKO because, to quote the *Wall Street Journal*, “he wanted to filter out Communists.” And from the mass of anecdotes, apocryphal or otherwise, that have accumulated around this man of fantastic wealth and fantastic energy may be taken the celebrated bulletin issued “*The Good Soldier Schweik*” is the latest Czech puppet film to be made by Jiri Trnka.



Bette Davis returns to the screen as Elizabeth I (a part she first played sixteen years ago in “*The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*”) in “*The Virgin Queen*,” with Richard Todd as Sir Walter Raleigh.

from a Chicago hotel in 1937—“Miss Katharine Hepburn will not marry Howard Hughes in Chicago today”—and the story that he paid only one visit to the RKO lot, and then brusquely to suggest “paint it.”

Although the company may have come under less colourful control, its future policy remains interesting. According to the Hollywood correspondent of the *Kinematograph Weekly*, “future operation seems to shape up as follows: an intensified programme of production of theatrical films at the studio by independents, production of television films at the subsidiary studio in Culver City, and gradual release of backlog pictures (amounting to some 700 films) to television.”

## Dynamic Frame

Associated British-Pathé, in conjunction with the British Film Institute, which has made a grant towards production from its Experimental Film Fund, is now sponsoring an unusually interesting experiment by Glenn Alvey (whose short film, *Help!*, was reviewed in our last issue). Produced by Howard Thomas, *The Hole in the Wall* (a two-reel film from H. G. Wells’s short story) will demonstrate a technique originated by Alvey himself—the “Dynamic Frame,” which varies the proportions of the screen.

Based on the 1.85 : 1 ratio—the film is being shot in Vista-Vision and colour—the screen will expand and contract during the action, by a combination of camera and laboratory processes, in order to emphasise dramatic and scenic effects. Sometimes the screen expansion will replace camera movement (for the sudden revelation of a new character, perhaps); sometimes it will contract to emphasise a point of detail; sometimes it will give a vertical image (to convey the height of trees in a forest, for instance). In general its purpose is to select a screen shape most suitable to the mood, setting or action of a particular scene. Its method, the director believes, will be sufficiently subtle and unostentatious not to make the audience over-conscious of technical devices. *The Hole in the Wall* will be ready for showing at the end of 1955.





# THE NAZI CINEMA (1933-1945)

by Louis Marcorelles

*Since the early 'thirties, little information or criticism of German films has appeared outside Germany itself. This article by a young French critic covers the Nazi period. In subsequent issues we shall publish surveys of the postwar German cinema in both Western and Eastern zones.*

*The Nazi Cinema. Leni Riefenstahl's "Olympiad," 1936.*

IN Western Germany today, one can detect a curious mixture of reserve and regret in critics who write about German films between 1933 and 1945, when the Nazi Government was effectively in control of the national output. Trying to explain the West German cinema's present flight from reality, the critic Theo Furstenuau places the main blame on the Nazi cinema, "*a dream factory in the service of a determinist political ideology.*" Another critic, Gerd Kalow, reproaches the Allies, above all the Americans, for dismantling the great German monopolies, UFA, Tobis, etc., without which an economically viable industry, offering some guarantee of artistic independence, cannot be established. "*This decision by the victorious powers,*" Kalow wrote, "*was largely dictated by the desire of interested parties to oppose all possibility of German competition . . .*"

This leads us to the two fundamental characteristics of the Nazi cinema: concentration of output in the hands of a very limited number of companies, rigidly State-controlled, and the marked emphasis on entertainment pictures, generally escapist in tendency. It was a

policy that reflected the inherent contradiction in the whole national-socialist ideology; which, like Soviet communism, claimed to subordinate individual activity (including art) to collective need, but retained, all the same, the basic economic structures of capitalist society.

The result of this strange cocktail was, inevitably, a bastard one. For the Nazi regime, in its effort to bend a totalitarian ideology to a system of free enterprise, only succeeded in retaining what was least good in both methods: on the one hand, the dryness, the lack of ambiguity, of genuine human conflicts, in a social order which administers Truth exclusively from the top level; on the other, the lack of direction, the refusal to go beyond simple appearances, the golden nickel of Hollywood's "best of all worlds."

At its best, the German cinema of this period has the merit of careful, consistent craftsmanship, too stubborn and coldly impersonal really to touch the emotions, a kind of cinema which is the perfect forecast of a world in which everyone is bored. A few sympathetic exceptions only confirm the rule.

The cinema, as American sociologists so often remind





"Resolutely escapist . . ." 'Tonelli,' directed by Tourjansky.

us, is the "mass medium" *par excellence*. For any totalitarian system, the temptation to take charge of it at once is strong. Goebbels could not resist it. On March 28, 1933, soon enough after he came to power, he announced that "the national revolution would not be limited to politics," but would encompass all economic and cultural spheres. On February 9 of the following year, he unequivocally defined the national-socialist credo: "We do not want in art any milieu that does not exist in life, we do not want characters who cannot be discovered in reality." And on another occasion he specified his *Weltanschauung*. "Like the other arts, the cinema must show what fills and uplifts the hearts of men, and transports them to the best of worlds. It must show eternity."

Goebbels held up Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* as a model to film-makers. From America and from Russia he had learnt the importance of centralising the means of film production. From 1933 to 1939 he applied himself to consolidating the strength of the huge UFA trust, which solemnly celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1943. Owning nearly 7,000 cinemas, not only in Germany, but in Scandinavia, Spain and other European countries, able to produce and process films in its own Berlin studios and laboratories, UFA, by the beginning of World War 2, had no cause to envy the biggest American firms.

In spite of UFA's pre-eminence in the German (if not the European) market, film production was formally shared between seven major companies that were also their own distributors—exactly like the "big eight" in Hollywood (the similarity is not fortuitous). Apart from UFA, Tobis, owners of the patent sound system most widely used in Europe, Terra and Berlin-Film, were also centred on Berlin; there were also Bavaria in Munich, created in 1939 from the fragments of several small companies, Vienna-Film and Prague-Film, established after the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia. In the 'forties, the German cinema was capable of producing, year in year out, 70 films of uniformly high technical standard in their photography, sound-recording and processing. It had access to all the necessary material resources with which to rival Hollywood. The conquest of most of Europe by the end of 1941 could only accelerate with a vengeance this process of industrialisation.

Even before the beginning of World War 2, Nazi Germany had almost entirely suppressed exhibition of American films inside its territories. On March 18, 1938, the

"The historical film is not a museum piece. . . ." Jannings as Kruger, in audience with Queen Victoria.

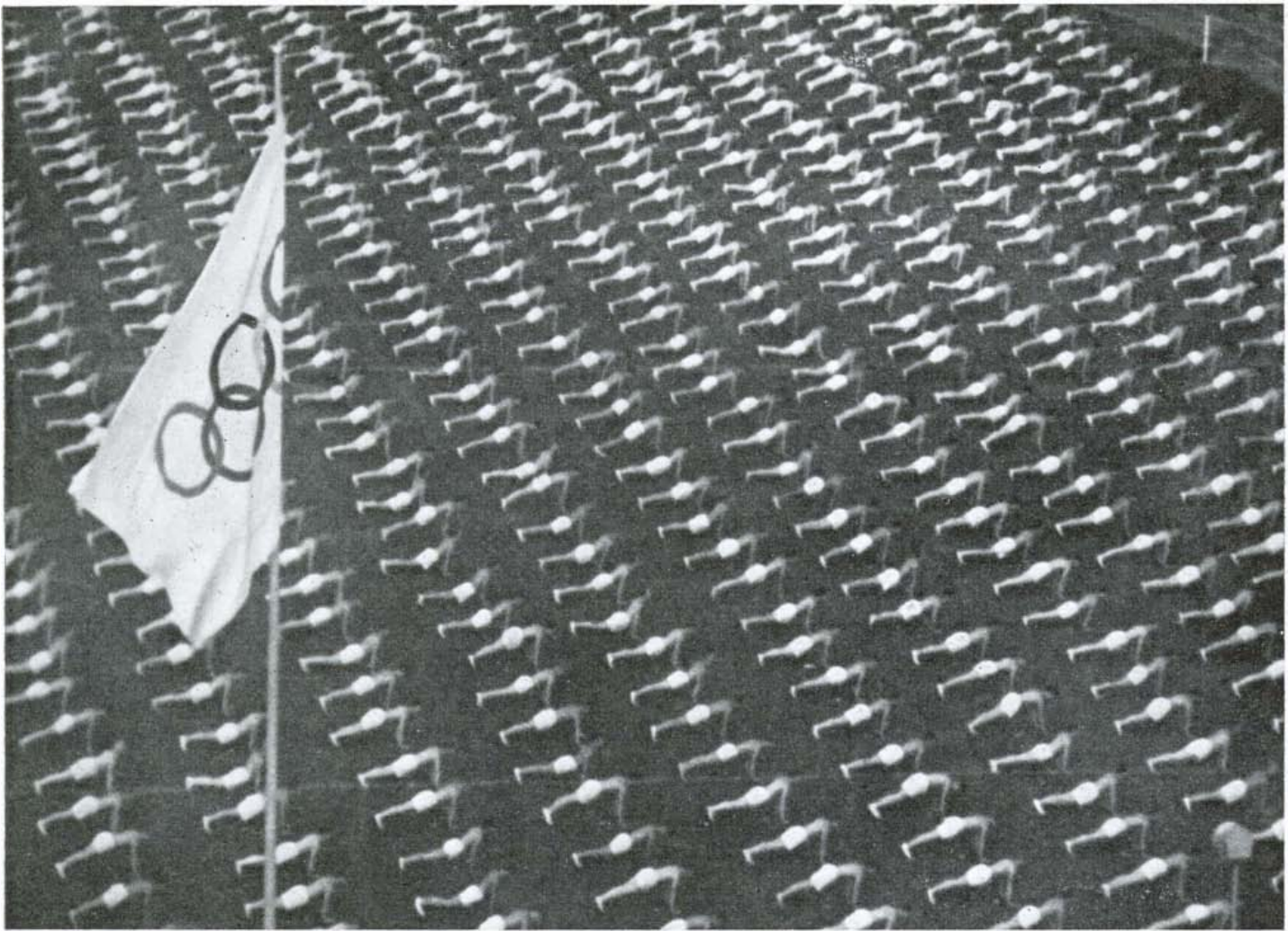
*Deutsche Filmakademie* was founded, and entrusted with the task of training new technicians and players indispensable to the German cinema. The courses comprised 23 different departments, including scenario-writing, direction, set and costume design, photography, sound-recording, acting, even distribution, house management and laboratory work. Five production executives were specially appointed for the major firms—UFA, Tobis, Terra, Bavaria and Vienna-Film—and answerable directly to the government.

The new German cinema claimed to rival Hollywood not only in its technical resources but even in its choice of subjects and *genres*. If German comedies remained conspicuous for their heaviness, if it was difficult to re-create the Far West on the banks of the Oder or the Spree, the makers of old-fashioned costume dramas and sentimental romances yielded nothing to their Hollywood colleagues. Rather than the veteran Carl Froelich, who had been making films since 1902 and specialised in costume pictures, and the regular operettes by Willi Forst, one should mention the highly expert purveyors of middle-class melodrama such as Hans Zerkow (who always worked with his wife, Olga Tschekowa, notably in *Reise in die Vergangenheit—Journey into the Past*), Erich Waschneck (*Die Affäre Roedern*), the Czech Martin Fritsch (*Der Zweite Schuss—The Second Shot*, a psychological drama in the Wyler manner, remarkably photographed by Jan Stallich), and Tourjansky, who emigrated to Germany (*Liebesgeschichten—Love Destiny*, a tender love-story not far below the level of Max Ophüls). Careful and fluid editing, nearly always excellent photography, made these films an exact counterpart to the Hollywood confections of Curtis Bernhardt or even William Wyler in his *Mrs. Miniver* vein. The fact is less surprising when one remembers the considerable number of German technicians working in Hollywood studios. All that was lacking were the big American stars—the Greer Garsons, the Spencer Tracys, the Jane Wymans.

All the same, Germany—the heavyweight Jannings and Heinrich George style apart—possessed some excellent actors, and increasingly gave chances to unknowns. UFA created its own acting school (in which Hildegard Knef,







"Olympiad."

for one, was trained) on the American model. A solid theatrical tradition, encouraged by the decentralisation of dramatic activity in most large towns, made it possible to find plenty of experienced artists to play supporting roles. When war came in 1939, the German cinema had attained a polish, a technical finesse and mastery capable of conquering the European and eventually the world market, and was at least assured of a struggle on equal terms with its rival across the Atlantic.

A great many of the two or three hundred pure entertainment or escapist films of this period can still be seen in German cinemas. They reflect a time when the German film industry, reorganised, State-controlled, with no obstacles in its path, needed all its technical or artistic resources to satisfy the genuine pangs of hunger for entertainment that gripped a nation submitted to the harsh rigours of total war. As in London, Berliners between the raids eagerly sought consolation and escape in their local *Palast*.

Where, then, was the national-socialist line in these resolutely escapist films? It seemed to exist solely in providing the best kind of recreation for a populace long deprived of so many of the charms of life, and drawn more and more inexorably towards total war, towards *Kriegseinsatz*.

### III

Goebbels searched in vain for his *Battleship Potemkin*, his Eisenstein and his Pudovkin. He had Veit Harlan and Hans Steinhoff, robust and not negligible talents—moral

reservations on their work apart—but totally lacking in genius. Like the statues of Arno Brecker, the regime's great official sculptor, Harlan and Steinhoff worked in the colossal, the massive. All the same, they are the most individual directors of the Nazi regime, in that they started to work out an artistic form of expression for some of the most cherished national-socialist myths.

### IV

In 1939 Veit Harlan made his odious *Jud Suss*, a version of the Leon Feuchtwanger novel previously filmed in England with Conrad Veidt. Ferdinand Marian created an excellent portrait of the Jew, artful, wary, subtle, who successfully insinuates himself into the confidence of the Duke of Wurtemberg, played on a genial note by Heinrich George. At the end his schemes misfire, and he finishes strung up in a kind of immense cage, amid the mockery of the crowd. The closing remark from one of the spectators is explicit enough: "*May our descendants never forget this lesson!*" The fascist critics Bardèche and Brasilach, in their revised *Histoire du Cinéma*, describe this as "*an almost joyous crescendo*," and make it seem even more repugnant.

After another historical film, *Das Unsterbliche Herz* (*The Immortal Heart*), with Heinrich George, set in medieval Nuremberg and free of ideological venom, Veit Harlan went on to explore the use of colour in three not undistinguished films. Each had a contemporary setting and a great many exteriors, for which Agfacolor—established in 1940—most closely rivalled Technicolor. *Die*



*Goldene Stadt* (The Golden City) was partly shot in Prague and used a musical theme from Smetana; *Immensee* (from Theodor Storm's romantic novel) and *Opfergang* (Sacrifice) were made in Schleswig-Holstein. On the subject of colour, Harlan made some pertinent observations: "The colour film represents a complete artistic revolution. Although we have been able to photograph in colour for some time, only the painter, so far, has been able to think and to express himself in colour. . . . Our own awareness of colour is stifled; we look at the world in daylight without considering its colour. . . ." *Immensee*, the best of the three films, at an opposite pole to the vicious hate of *Jud Suss*, is a film of peace and love. Its love-story, filmed in the countryside where Storm himself lived, reflects the director's pagan and brutal lyrical streak. With Kristina Soderbaum (Harlan's wife, who appeared in all his films) in the leading role, *Immensee* conveys a strong feeling for nature and a fervent idyllic mood.

Hans Steinhoff, the second notable figure of the period, displays neither the racial prejudice nor the lyrical force of Harlan. His style is more didactic, literal and weighty. Immediately after the Nazis' rise to power, he made *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933), considered by many as a masterpiece of propaganda. But it was in 1935, with *Der alte und der junge König* (The Old and the Young King), with Jannings as Frederick the Great, that he established his most successful genre: the historical film with contemporary implications, a speciality of the Tobis company. Ewald von Demandowsky, Tobis' production executive appointed by the government, defined the official concept, with which Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* and Pudovkin's *Admiral Nakhimov* have something in common. "The historical film is not a museum piece. The names are historical, but the ideas are contemporary. . . . The historical film is a child of our century. It is the mirror of the past, the buttress of the present, the signpost to the future. . . ." The historical film in this sense includes some strictly political reconstructions as well as Steinhoff's Frederick the Great film, his *Ohm Kruger* (about which more later), and Wolfgang Liebeneiner's two films about Bismarck (the second played by Jannings, and called *Die Entlassung* (The Release)). These and the various biographies of philosophers, artists (including a painstaking *Rembrandt* by Steinhoff) and writers, are all slanted to the theme of the individual creating his work in the face of opposition from an uncomprehending society, but himself always fully conscious of his moral obligation to the German collective spirit. The historical film always resolves itself into an exaltation of German nationalism, of the individual's submission to the State and community well-being.

These ideologically controlled films often become wearisome, drowned in a welter of talk and banality, saved here and there only by the epic vigour of a Steinhoff or the plastic genius of a Pabst. Returning to his native country just before the declaration of war, Pabst first of all made a film about actors, *Komödianten*, with Henny Porten; and then towards the end of 1942, in the Barrandov studios at Prague, undertook a large-scale biographical tribute to *Paracelsus* (played by Werner Krauss), the Swiss-born healer of the Middle Ages who upheld the cause of natural medicine and, in reaction against contemporary authority, published his works not in Latin (which he didn't know), but in German. If Pabst finds obvious difficulty in transcending nationalistic claptrap, if he lacks the candour and conviction of a Harlan or a Steinhoff, he at least extracts some magical effects from medieval costumes and settings, and the completely mimed sequence of the appearance of Death would in itself justify the mediocrity of the rest.

By contrast, there is some warmth in Steinhoff's historical reconstructions, in *Robert Koch* (1939), biography of the German Pasteur, and above all in *Ohm Kruger*, an anti-British film about the Boer War. In both films Emil Jannings played the leading role, and was even "artistic supervisor" on the second. Steinhoff builds up his films with patiently accumulated, sometimes intimate detail. Aided by the slow, emphatic performance of Jannings, the fine camera-work by Fritz-Arno Wagner (who formerly worked with Murnau, Pabst and Lang), Steinhoff brings some vitality in *Ohm Kruger* to the somewhat clumsily propagandist situations in which the English, with their brutal methods, are made to seem aggravatingly like the Germans. The film alternates between intimate epic (a macabre, cunning, whisky-swilling Queen Victoria) and battle epic. In the final images, Jannings, staggering blinded in his tent, only the whites of his eyes showing, becomes the symbol of a powerless humanity in the grip of fate.

## V

But Steinhoff's films remain exaggerated and contrived, with true feeling always subservient to propaganda. Perhaps only the two famous Leni Riefenstahl films, with their pagan exaltation of athletic prowess, their percussive rhythm, really succeeded in conveying something of the new mystique that Nazism claimed to introduce into all spheres of cultural life.

It is probably in the strict documentary field, in fact, that the Nazi cinema is seen at its best. From 1933 onwards UFA developed its famous *Kulturfilme*, and other companies followed suit. Two personalities dominate this specialised and non-political activity: Ulrich K. T. Schulz and Martin Rikli, the first confining himself mainly to plant and animal life, the second to experiments in physics, chemistry and practical medicine. In *Mysterium des Lebens*, Schulz examines plant cells under the microscope, and in *Röntgenstrahlen* (X-Rays) Rikli shows us the skeleton of a hand as it plucks the strings of a musical instrument. Sometimes these effects are extraordinarily powerful; a drop of water falling into a gutter, observed in slow motion and magnified to several times its natural size, glimpses in colour of the life-cycle of a cuttlefish under the sea, ejecting black liquid to cover its flight from an enemy. By their skilful popularisation of natural phenomena, Schulz and Rikli deserve a more than honourable place alongside Painlevé, Dolin and Sucksdorff. Their objectivity, if it only achieves poetry at isolated, improvised moments, has the merit of that complete, frank accuracy which should be the prime quality of any documentary.

Also part of the documentary school are the famous *Deutsche Wochenschau*, the German newsreels, which hold their own with British, American and Soviet equivalents for implacable recording of the savagery of modern warfare. Their wide range of material, combined with captured French and British newsreels, were also used, of course, in the compilation of the two long campaign films, *Baptism of Fire* and *Victory in the West*, which contain some remarkable passages of victorious elation, in which national strength is celebrated à la Riefenstahl with dynamically edited shots of the German military machine set to Wagnerian music. More pacifically, Curt Oertel presented his credentials as a maker of art films with *Michelangelo*, filmed in Italy. This long and massive film, at its best in some resourceful camera explorations of sculpture, has earned its maker a slightly inflated reputation.

But if, as a whole, these documentary works are worth consideration for their seriousness and craftsmanship, they lack the passion necessary to create a national school. Genius, real excitement, and a flair for improvisation, are the most difficult qualities to discern in the German cinema





"Jud Suss." The Jew imprisoned and mocked.

between 1933 and 1945.

After 1940 a new generation of film-makers began to appear, and their work is interesting above all as a testament of independence, of mute protest against an epoch dedicated to total war and the glorification of heroes. Firstly, *Romanze in Moll* (*Romance in a Minor Key*) (1942), a romanticised love-story vaguely adapted from Maupassant, introduced Helmut Kautner—who appears briefly in one scene as an aesthete preoccupied with theories on the cult of art for art's sake—as a director of some individuality. This story of a young girl who falls in love with a famous orchestral conductor, conceals her affair with him from her husband, and, when her lover leaves her, kills herself rather than return to a drab middle-class existence, has a melancholy, desperate, genuinely personal feeling; and today, though it seems as dated as other over-expressionist works, it retains some value as an isolated protest against the commonplace optimism of its time. A few months before the fall of Berlin, an almost unknown young director made an unusually sympathetic film, a kind of sentimental comedy with a love-story and clowning by Charlie Rivals, photographed in a heavy contrast style by Georg Bruckbauer, cameraman on *Romanze in Moll*. This was *Akrobat-scho-o-on!* (*Bravo, Acrobat!*), and the director was Wolfgang Staudte, today the leading dramatic director (*The Murderers are Amongst Us*, etc.) in Eastern Germany. Also worthy of mention is an agreeable little comedy by Bogislav Barlog, now director of the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, *Junge Herzen* (*Young Hearts*), in which

two young people play a game of love and chance at a German seaside resort, and on a visit to Potsdam skate irreverently down the galleries at Saint-Souci behind the guardian's back. This film stands apart for its freshness and spontaneity, and its moments of sensuality lightly overcast with sadness.

## VI

One cannot believe that such talents are today wholly lost, even though the Kautner of *Romanze in Moll*, with a commonplace subject, showed so much more invention and genuine feeling than the Kautner of *The Last Bridge*, even though the pleasingly good-humoured Staudte of *Akrobat-scho-o-on!* has become so impersonally sombre. It seems that a new weight of moral responsibility has descended on Germany, on a nation that often seems eternally floundering in a guilt-complex and a straining after grand gestures and feelings. The East offers a *Wozzeck* made to 30-year-old expressionist formulas, or explains that *The Murderers are Amongst Us*. The West seems narrowly bound to fluctuating popular taste, and yields nothing more than manufactured light comedies and costume pieces. The Visconti or the Castellani of the new German cinema has so far signally failed to appear.

One wonders, in fact, when the eternal sleep-walker of *Caligari* will escape from his dreams of alarm and fantasy, when Germany is going to rediscover the simple light of day—when a magician of the image and the heart is going to waken the sleeping beauty.





# MORE LIGHT

BY

Josef von  
Sternberg

*"Every light has a point where it is brightest . . ." Marlene Dietrich in the last of her films with von Sternberg, "The Devil is a Woman".*

*Michelangelo was explaining to a visitor a number of additions and alterations which he had made to a statue. "These are trifles," said his friend. "It may be so," said the sculptor, "but recollect that trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle."*

**"LET there be light, and there was light!"** God was the first electrician. Before light there was nothing. Light was the climax of creation. Then, according to the Bible, came a minor climax—man was created.

There was also Prometheus who put a torch to the chariot of the sun and brought light to man, reversing the above order of creation according to the Greeks. For stealing the property of the gods he was chained to Mount Caucasus and his liver became the prey of vultures. (And to this day cameramen are bilious.)

Light means fire and heat and life. Without light there is nothing. Darkness is the territory of the grave.

The last words of the great German poet Goethe were: *"Mehr Licht."* He had thought deeply about life and had said things better than most men, but when his eyes grew dim he had only two words to express everything he thought: more light. Without light there is nothing.

The history of light is the history of life, and the human eye was the first camera. It is shaped like a lens, and the image we see is reversed like in a camera—and made upright again by the brain. It took millions of years for man to create a sensitive surface to hold fast the effect of light and a few years more to pile one image on the other and to turn persistency of vision into the motion picture.

Every subject has a moment when light can force its beauty into full power, and that brings us to the province of the artist. The artist's duty and function is to capture not so much that which he can perceive—but that which

his skill and imagination can endow with full power—no matter what the subject may be. We must learn to behold and to create—not with the camera but with the eye.

The camera is only an accessory to the human eye and serves principally to frame—to include and to exclude. Within the frame the artist collects that which he wishes us to behold—beyond the frame he places what he considers of no value for us to see. It is important to know how to use the camera—but it is more important to know how to use the eye. We cannot see without light and we cannot photograph without it. Therefore the knowledge of what light means is the first step in the direction of what photography means.

Every light has a point where it is brightest and a point toward which it wanders to lose its force completely. Light can go straight, go around, deflect, turn back and pierce through; it can be gathered or be spread, made to sparkle or be blocked. Where it is no more—is blackness, and where it begins is the core of its brightness. The journey of rays from that central core to the outposts of blackness is the adventure and drama of light.

Shadow is mystery and light is clarity. Shadow conceals—light reveals. (To know what to reveal and what to conceal and in what degree to do this is all there is to art.) Each light furnishes its own shadow, and where we see a shadow we know there must be a light. The great Alexander threw his shadow over Diogenes when he asked the man who lived in a barrel to name his wish, and the answer was: *"Stand from between me and the sun!"* This answer does not mean that Diogenes craved the sun, since he attempted to achieve the enviable position of craving nothing—but that he was irritated by a meaningless shadow.



The sun is the brightest light we know. It never ceases to project its rays. When the earth spins us away from it we see the stars only because the sun is still shining. This great source of light never stands still and its movement spells day and night, dawn and dusk. Between the earth and the sun is air. Air is the diffusion—the veil; and when it is too thin the sun becomes destructive and when it is too thick the sun loses its power. Thick air gathered and arranged by winds is called a cloud and when a cloud intercepts the sun the earth is drab. This paragraph is not to reiterate what every child knows, but to call attention that the angle of light and what it has to penetrate is of great importance to the appearance of the subject.

Light has a source, a direction and a point where its strength fails—and every light throws a shadow. If you choose any object and place a light anywhere you are a photographer, but if you can make the light bathe the object with the ever-varying drama of its rays and its shadow—you might be a good photographer. The black box, the glass and the sensitive silver is incidental.

The more light sources you use the more capable you must be. Lights can be friendly to each other or antagonize each other—or, what is worse, duplicate each other's functions—and then the rays are no longer bearers of beauty—they carry confusion. When you learn to photograph, begin with one light; if that one light is mastered, all other lights are mastered too.

The motion picture began by using one light: the light of the sun, and it followed the sun to California where it shone the brightest and the steadiest—and where it is now used the least. This is quaint and humorous though not without its reason. The first studios were built out of glass to permit the sun to enter. Those who built these glass houses thought they were as Joshua and could command the sun to stand still. But the sun, indifferent to man and his problems, moved, and bit by bit the glass was painted black and the sun banished, to be replaced by a sun built by human hands that could move and stand still as ordered. The first lights were of mercury, weak and feeble and flickering, but the lights were made steadier and stronger until an electric arc was invented and actually called "the sun." Equivalent to the power of millions of lighted candles and blinding in its effect, the inventor tried to imitate the power of the sun and the photographer tried to imitate its effect.

Imitation is not art—not even imitation of nature. We all somehow know that. When an artificial flower is made to decorate a girl's hat the girl will say: "*My, don't it look real!*" but give this same girl a branch of cherry in flower and she will say: "*It looks as beautiful as if it were painted.*"

The painter has taught us how to see and what to look for. When I first discussed this chapter with Erich Maria Remarque he said: "*Whenever I see a painter working in a beautiful landscape I know he is a bad painter.*" This means that the painter is judged by other standards than by the selection of his subject. Cézanne loved to paint common landscapes early in the morning long before others had their breakfast because the light was then at an angle, but he loved most to paint apples, a clock, cloth

or a skull: something that didn't move and which he could inspect and place under favourable light conditions that could be controlled.

The great painters who have said magnificently all that literature might have neglected, have pointed out with never-ending emphasis that the subject, however it may reveal the mentality of the painter, is secondary to the treatment.

They have painted everything they could see and everything they could imagine and not always the human form and face. They have painted sailboats, mountains, clouds and flowers but also the carcass of an ox, and whatever the subject, we have been taught to observe the values they have given it—that is, if we care to enter their world. One taught us to see trees, another to see the interior of a room, another dirty snow on old houses; they taught us to see beauty in the crucifixion, in a laundry; in an autopsy, in drunken revelry, and in an ugly body and an apparently ugly face.

The painter's power over the human form and face is of course terrific. Not compelled to move it as we are, he can fix the body and the expression to his complete satisfaction and invest the subject permanently with his own nobility. Leonardo makes his Mona Lisa smile with an inscrutability that may last as long as the earth. Renoir paints flesh until, as he has said, it is tempting enough to make him want to bite it. Rubens paints the figures he desires to embrace, Raphael creates the madonnas he wishes to worship, and Michelangelo throws beings into stone and on canvas like he wants to be, and all painters people their world with their chief interests—though if you see the side of an old wall painted by Utrillo or a clown by Rouault, the chief interest may not be instantly apparent.

The artist lauds or glorifies—invents freely when he finds nothing—protests or destroys that which he does not like—but he never operates without comment.

It is possible for an artist to be a photographer—and for the photographer to be an artist. But in being an artist he is judged as such and must use the standards of art. Being a photographer alone does not even mean that one knows how to photograph.



"The human face must be treated like a landscape, and invested with the relief of light and the retreat of shadow". Marian Marsh (Sonya) and Peter Lorre (Raskolnikov) in "*Crime and Punishment*".





"The face is in itself an inspiring mask when not maligned. . ."  
Marlene Dietrich in "Blonde Venus".

Those who merely reproduce what they see also have their use—and the frame and angle and the moment they choose to expose, also disclose their viewpoint—they, too, are qualified to photograph—but to the artist the subject is incidental, and what he thinks about it is all important.

The world in which the artist moves is the world of light and only the world of light. Light has strongly affected the imagination of all men, though there are some who are more sensitive to it than others. But light affects not only men but entire races of men, the quality of landscapes, and the animate and inanimate life of a whole country.

Even cities have different lights. The light of Paris and the light of London are dissimilar and the light of California varies from the light of Iceland. All weather affects the light, and rain or snow splits and reflects it. Light operates only when it hits an object but the air is solid too. Though the property of light is clearly noticed when air is condensed to a fog it is also visible to the sensitive eye in the rarest atmosphere, and air too can be made to glow.

Not even the most ignorant photographer is unconscious of light, though he may be at a loss to use it, and though the result may be disastrous. A story goes that before the days of Gutenberg, some simpletons built a city hall in a little German town and forgot to provide for windows, whereupon they formed a bucket brigade and tried to throw light into the dark building with buckets, and when that failed to work, they brought out sacks, cut the rays of the sun with scissors, tied up the bags and tried to empty the light into the building that way. These methods are not far removed from the usual method in photography where light and space is barricaded, wasted and used to no purpose.

We see in terms of light and our work is reproduced in terms of light. It speaks to us in terms of light though it may often be judged in terms of darkness. Let me stop

for a second in my discussion of light, and descend with me into the regions of darkness—into the inferno of our particular world. There, when these things are discussed, one kneels, touches one's head several times to the east and mumbles the name of whichever producer, director, author or columnist happens to be the reigning box-office specialist. I'll spare you the names because they have no place in this discussion. Any one of a dozen temporary shibboleths when rubbed fervently into any Hollywood debate are Maxim silencers. Should one dare to mention, for instance, that the photographer and the director in motion pictures should be indivisible one can produce a major tremor in California. Why should the earth quake at this simple and logical ideal? The director writes with the camera whether he wishes to or not, or whether the others permit it or not. He influences and controls the camera as definitely as if he carried it in his pocket and took it with him at night to place it next to his watch beside his bed. What harm is there if a man knows his tools? Ah! shout the film marines, then you don't allow others to function.

Somewhere in "A Thousand and One Nights," a princess is wooed with the condition that the suitor who recognises a certain mystifying object wins her or, failing to distinguish the nature of the puzzling object, his head is added to the pile of the others who had desired the maiden. In our case the "mystifying object" is the finished film. In the Arabian Nights, Scheherezade tells us that the winner took a swift look, recoiled in horror, and cried, "'Tis the skin of a louse grown large in oil!" Let us inspect this bloated skin a little closer. When I was an assistant director I worked for Sam Goldwyn, who one day saw the film that had been done for him. In the silence that followed came his still small voice, "Who directed this film?" A man by the name of Windon stood up. "Who wrote the story?" Another arose. "Who assisted?" I stood up. "Who photographed?" Another stood. "Who cut this fine work?" I lifted my head proudly. "Who put those actors in the picture?" My old friend, MacIntyre, jumped to his feet. "You're all fired!" Mr. Goldwyn said in penetrant disgust as he left the room. There is a reverse to this false diagnosis. When a film is a success even the man who swept the floor after work is quickly snatched up by a rival studio in an attempt to find the formula. But should my opinion be consulted, I would venture to observe that a scientific analysis would disclose that the only insect which grew the skin in the first place was the director, and no matter how long the skin was soaked to make it monstrous, nothing but the director was the original inhabitant.

There are some directors, among whom I am numbered, who can photograph their own films. Personally I have often preferred to work without a photographer, and where I have worked with one, he has used light and position of camera with precise instruction from me, even when afterwards he accepted "Academy honours." I find it wastes time to instruct in something which I can equal with little effort, and therefore have often combined the technical function of director and cameraman to the intense disgust of the companies I have worked for, who have repeatedly challenged me to stop "fooling" with the camera.

This "fooling" with the camera saves time and energy, as otherwise director and cameraman must outguess each other and waste valuable effort in synchronizing their work. The large companies have iron-clad ideas to the contrary, and so my work has been checked with stop-watches to confirm my loose statement that I can operate twice as fast by "interfering" with the cameraman, rather than to sprawl in a chair and wait for his functions to cease, which cessation can only take place after he has



provided light for every possible emergency of the actors, rather than for the movements that only I can cause.

But the factory system (against which I have nothing except that it is wasteful and self-destructive) of motion picture photography is dominated today not by the director, but (a) by the laboratory whose principal interest is to insure even exposure rather than to expose the real culprits, and (b), what is more absurd, by men called associate-producers or supervisors who are paid from one hundred and fifty dollars to seven thousand a week to duplicate and trip up every specialised task in motion pictures in the name of organising these tasks.

I was once called in by one of these "experts" and to my astonishment told precisely how to photograph a close-up of a much-publicised female, and actually shown a frame of film, containing the face of another star taken from another film; and I was told to imitate its shaky composition and effect, together with the empty space over her wig to provide ventilation for some purpose incomprehensible to me. I was informed this was "company photography" and to adhere to it, and when I suggested that I liked to see photographic space contain interest other than unnecessary air providing solely for the comfort of a producer, he mumbled something about leaving everything to him. I left some other things to him with the result that the whole film was shelved for many a day and not shown until some fifty writers, directors, producers, photographers and editors managed to paste together something which any one of them could easily have done better alone.

This denaturing method of using the elements of photography is, to state it in my kind and mild fashion—faulty. In contrast the fine use of light creates a world of magic where the significance of every object, alive or not, is not only revealed in full essence but endowed with wonderful qualities, intangible though they may be.

The distance, intensity, sharpness and angle of light is an inexhaustible topic, particularly in our work where the motions of the subject and the movements of the camera constantly make for new combinations.

Even where we can't move the light we can move the camera, and the technique of the motion picture is based on the movement of both.

Granted that my own sensitivity to the problem of light may exceed the need for its normal application, it is nevertheless advisable for the director to have some knowledge of its superlative grace. While working with me, Miss Dietrich became so conscious of the value of light that her emotions dwindled when the lights snapped off one by one and the stage became dark, and when she walked past the power house, where the final switch was pulled to stop the dynamo, she felt as if she had received a blow.

The creation of visual beauty is not an easy accomplishment. We demand of beauty, visual or not, that it heal us from the wounds of life, and infinite care must be used to keep it from being marred by the slightest imperfection. No chain is stronger than its weakest link and if a film could be made, with all flaws eliminated, to show the perfection of the material, it would take instant place beside the masterpieces of the world's art. Part of the

*"The adventure and drama of light". Charles Laughton and Flora Robson in the unfinished film of "I, Claudius" that von Sternberg began in England in 1937.*







"Shadow is mystery. . . ." The island jungle of von Sternberg's most recent film, "The Saga of Anatahan," shot in Japan.

Russian experiment years ago, as Eisenstein explained it to me, was to abolish art because it is useless. Of course, that theory was not clearly thought out, since its very virtue is the supposed uselessness. We soon are sick and tired of what is useful alone. The Russian experiment is not over yet, nor is it confined to Russia. There was a good reason for wanting to abolish art. Art creates beauty, and beauty is disturbing to those who wish to contemplate ugliness. René Fülöp-Miller told me that Lenin could not listen to music. Listen to Lenin: "*But I can't often listen to music, it goes against the grain of my nerves. I would like to talk sweet nothings and fondle the heads of these people who can create such beauty in the midst of a dirty hell. But today is not the time to fondle the heads of human beings; today their skulls must be split, pitilessly—though the battle against force is our last ideal—a difficult task.*"

Men who create beauty do not split heads pitilessly, and the creation of beauty is not quite so easy as murder. Expressed in various ways, beauty is synonymous with our longing to escape from the commonplace. It is the period of peace, in which we gather our strength for the conflict of life, and it is the reason for such conflict. All we fight for is to make life beautiful. But in fighting for beauty we must distinguish between those who fight to make their own life beautiful and those who fight to make the lives of others beautiful. Force beauty in others and you're in trouble. Each man has his own seventh heaven. But beauty does not force, it does not clamour—it releases. The artist and the reformer are non-identical. You can teach others to see, but you cannot overcome resistance to beauty with bodily violence or any other kind of violence.

The artist is the officiating priest who administers the sacrament of beauty, and beauty is the business of every form of art. It is maintained that there are some who have no sense of beauty—I never met one who didn't. It may take a curious form, like gazing at a rubber plant with rapture, but in one form or another—though often concealed, it is part of our mortal clay.

The film has two instruments with which to record this beauty. One is the camera and the other is the microphone. Both are merciless.

Every instrument is superior in its inherent potentialities—to the human being using it—though there are occasional masters who can make us feel that the very limit of the ultimate power has been reached. The violin list-

lessly held before it is placed firmly against the shoulder promises more than it ever performs—and neither the camera nor the microphone has as yet recorded the great power both of which contain when they stand black and silent before touched by human hand.

On our stage these two, the camera and the microphone, are viewed with reverence—more so than the human being. Should something go wrong with the machine, everyone waits patiently until repairs are made, and sits quietly as if in a church. Not so when anything goes wrong with the human being. He is scolded and reviled and is asked to direct or act even when sick and in pain. The human being is usually less respected than a machine, but that may be because we credit the human being with more endurance, or because we erroneously believe that its parts are not really worn out until life ceases.

For a long time our profession endured the tyranny of the camera until it was confronted with the microphone. Its congenital tendency to contradict the camera was recognized by few. The viewpoint of the artist had dominated photography long before the arrival of sound, which returned the film to the primitive stage of engraving an accidental image. The camera even became an enemy, since it made noise—and it was punished and confined in a dog house from where it could only look out behind heavy glass plates. It took two or three years to permit the camera to emerge into its old freedom.

Before the arrival of the microphone, the optical instrument had been played by men, some more talented than others, who used it with austerity. Their world did not consist of what they saw so much as of what they could make us see. The camera had been taught to combat the imitative trend which runs into the dead end of reproduction. Verisimilitude, whatever its value, is a dangerous opponent of art.

Upon entrance into our intimate circle, the microphone was viewed with great interest, like one looks at a Mexican jumping bean. It arrived in the shape of a small black cannon and was held by a human being who tried his best frantically to escape the eye of the camera. Whenever he moved he made noise. Whenever anybody moved the result was noise. Creaking floors received more attention than creaking stories and whenever a bystander sneezed or coughed he was told to either control his nose and throat or to leave. A distant airplane terrorized the stage like in an air raid—and for a long time the camera was forgotten.

The acoustic instrument was used by engineers with skill in transferring precisely what was heard, without the benefit of even the most primitive non-mechanistic viewpoint. The human voice is no doubt a thrilling road to the quality of the human being, but a beautiful voice is not always arranged to dwell in a harmonious body. Moreover it needs the tincture of great inner experience. The camera, however, had collected by virtue of its ambitions human beings to act before it that formed a second Tower of Babel. No two voices matched either in accent or intelligence, let alone in beauty.

Personally I was uneasy at being precipitated into this problem. Biding my time until the microphone could be made subservient to the same control as the camera, I attempted to use dialogue and music only to counterpoint and supplement the work of the camera, rarely permitting both the same function, but, instead, stimulating and provoking associate ideas that brought in scope and distance beyond the ability of either instrument to produce alone. Though often, unfortunately, achieving only artificial instead of artistic values, I nevertheless persisted in attempting to order human speech into an acoustic pattern, regarding all sound whether coming from a lifeless source or not as subject to musical laws.

The profane voice of the average motion picture actor



can and does injure the vision of the dramatist if his person has not already done so. The problem of the human voice is entirely different on the screen where the audience is forced to view the vision of the owner of that voice through the eye of the camera—from the problem of the human voice in the theatre where the actor retains the face he puts on when he leaves his dressing room.

Even there the human voice can be damaging. An oft-told anecdote deals with an irate critic leaving the theatre furiously at the end of the first act. When the manager caught up with him and asked him whether he couldn't hear, the infuriated critic shouted at him, fire in his eyes: "*That's the trouble! I heard every word!*"

The problem of the microphone is one that will not long escape the attention of the artist. It was comparatively easy at once to accustom the audience to regard with appreciation the changing of the harsh roar of a train or the sound of battle or a similar strident noise into obvious musical treatment, but the problem of the human voice may take longer to solve.

Intrinsically the sound machine almost from its very inception was capable of mechanical distortion and artistic perception. The present effective though complicated system of mixing sound is already far beyond the ability of any human being controlling it today. I sometimes have fused a dozen different sound tracks into one—reducing and augmenting each one at will. Even the worst sort of film has already adopted what I did at once: to make the voice of the speaker attend the face of the listener, to bring the outer world into a room, to change the exaggerated sound of footsteps into meaning (though even today the architect will paint his wood to seem like marble, forgetting that sound also photographs), to use distant speech and laughter as part of a sound curtain instead of hearing a solo in an empty world, to make echo and the tone of space dramatic ("Academy honours" to my mechanics who protested in writing this proper, essential use of sound), and a dozen other a, b, c, technicalities without which sound is too blatant.

But sound, though important and potentially effective, will always play a supplementary role to sight, as the camera has proven itself to be a diabolical instrument that conveys ideas with lightning speed. Through some curious inherent quality of flattening all lines and making them instantly perceptive and overprominent, it has achieved an anatomical property that analyzes every split second of motion. It exposes imbecility without the slightest hesitation and holds up to contempt both the person who uses it badly and the mistreated subject.

Time and again the news-camera has revealed the stupidity of well-known public figures or has so overpowered the subject that roars of laughter have greeted the person and his utterances which, conveyed to us by microphone alone, or through the radio, succeeded in impressing us. (Winston Churchill was made to look a fool by the news-camera. I sat next to him on the evening Edward VIII abdicated to rock England, and while everyone was waiting for him to express his opinion, he called the head-waiter and said: "*This coffee is very inadequate.*")

The camera, left to its own devices, is an incisive, vivisectioning, and often destructive instrument, and the men behind the camera have devoted much time and effort to appease the cruelty of the little piece of glass through which our work is gathered.

The art of cinematography has been falsely compared to the art of painting—which does not depend upon sudden effect and does not vanish before it can be closely analyzed or inspected for any length of time. Moreover it stands still, while the average motion picture contains from three hundred to one thousand variously composed

angles, in their turn composed of thousands of fleeting images which must be ordered into a continuity of effect—one viewpoint—while the painter constructs his canvas with its one image to withstand the critical inspection of centuries.

Though the painter, like everyone else, is justified in discussing the value of the motion picture, his work in it can prove completely ineffectual without intense photographic experience. Gifted painters have been at work in our medium and they have proven to be less capable than a less gifted artist who has learned to see in terms of the camera. In Japan, Foujita showed me a film he made for his government, and though he is an able painter his work on the screen turned him into a beginner.

In order to function at all, the artist must make his men, women and other materials move with the grace and efficiency of his vision and speak with a melody which he composes. Whether he is able to do so or not is a matter for others to determine. But it is for no one to determine the principles of art. They have been determined long ago.

The cardinal points of photography are identical with those of painting. They are—material—subject—composition—light—and the most obvious of all—viewpoint. The radical point of departure is—motion.

To begin with the material—still photography as distinguished from motion picture photography has one enormous advantage which some day will cease to be: that is the treatment of the surface of the photograph. Choice of grain in the paper, manipulation of the negative, the enlargement of an interesting detail can salvage otherwise uninteresting work and make it effective. It is only a matter of time when such manipulation will be incorporated into our work.

The subject whatever it be, water, sky, landscape, pavement, machine or face, animate or inanimate, must be viewed with impartial eye and made to reflect its inner values—and the value of the artist. These must be captured and held fast at their best, and it is the duty of the artist not only to engrave the image at the moment of its highest grace but to animate the subject. If the subject is human, this is not easy. It may be possible to inspire a momentary glow but to maintain that glow is unbelievably difficult—both for the subject and for the artist.

The motion picture has capitalised the human being in particular and has not without some justice attempted to state that it is the container of everything that can thrill us. The camera proceeded to explore the human figure from every angle and to concentrate on its face.

The face is in itself an inspiring mask when not maligned, and our whole past and ancestry has left its mark on its surface in ever-varying arrangements no two of which are alike, just as even the whorls of our fingertips differ. There are painters who have painted nothing but the human face and, like Yawlsky, have finally reduced it to a simple pattern which varies only in elementary line and color.

(Continued on page 109)







# Kenji Mizoguchi

by DONALD RICHIE  
and  
J. L. ANDERSON

EVEN today, when Kenji Mizoguchi talks about motion pictures he uses the word "*sashin*," which is an abbreviation of "*katsudo shashin*," the original Japanese term, though the more common "*eiga*" has been in almost exclusive use for over thirty years. It is as though a Western director continually referred to the movies as "*le cinématographe*" or even "the flickers."

This slight idiosyncrasy is important only in so far as it illuminates Mizoguchi's own attitude towards the films, but it does seem to express the salient fact that he is twenty years behind the cinematic times. And this is his peculiar strength as a director. In many ways Mizoguchi is a man from the golden age of the cinema, and to this extent he is something of an anomaly in the modern world.

He was born in Tokyo, on May 16, 1898, during the lull between the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars. The Meiji period was drawing to an impressive close and Japan was eagerly swallowing anything with a foreign label on it. The women were slipping into ten-year-late Paris models and, for the men, a crushable fedora, worn with kimono and geta, was very much *au courant*. Among the many importations pouring into the country was the art of the cinema, as represented not only by an Edison Vitascope but also by a Lumière *Cinématographie*. Before Mizoguchi had begun to walk, the first Japanese production had begun; before he could write his name legibly, rather long narrative films were being constructed, initially from the *kabuki*, a bit later from the *shimpa*.

At an early age the young Mizoguchi showed a decided interest in things pictorial, liked to draw and was early turning out cats and cherry trees. This proclivity towards the graphic arts is actually not too revealing, as almost all children—Japanese or not—exhibit the same degree of talent. It was unusual, however, that the young Mizoguchi upon reaching the age of reason did not drop his paints in favour of the fishmonger's knife or the abacus. Instead, he enrolled in a painting institute, one of the modern kind that specialised in Western-style art.

After graduating, he left crowded, modern Tokyo and travelled down to the graciously old-fashioned heart of Japan, the Kansai. He did not live in austere Nara, nor in the culturally prodigious Kyoto, nor even in bustling Osaka. Instead, he lived in Kobe, the port which shares with Yokohama the distinction of being one of the most hideous on earth. Here, in this second-rate imitation of Tokyo, he got a job on a newspaper, where he largely wasted his talents designing advertisements.

Mizoguchi's mother had died when he was seventeen, and now, at twenty-one, he returned to an even more crowded, even more modern Tokyo; and discovered that he could not find a job. After several months of looking, he finally gave up and began to spend most of his time with a friend. This friend lived in Mukojima, which is just across the Sumida River from Asakusa, the amusement centre of the city and the one section which even now, after wars, earthquakes and a particularly disastrous bombing, retains something of the genial 18th century about it, the thoroughly commonplace and thoroughly delightful spirit of the Edokko.

Here, in this stimulating environment, Mizoguchi lived with, and off, his friend, who happened to be a lute teacher. Nearby was the Mukojima studio of the Nikkatsu Motion Picture Company, and the lute teacher used often to go there to give lessons or act as adviser. Occasionally Mizoguchi, having nothing better to do,

"The Life of O-Haru". Kinuyo Tanaka as the courtesan who became a nun.



would go along too, and in this way he eventually met Haru Wakayama, known as one of the new "progressive-style" directors. In this way, too, he one day got a job as actor.

In those days the female roles in the movies were taken by men, just as in the *kabuki* and the *noh*, but already a revolution was imminent. The Shockiku Company had made an unprecedented move and was beginning to use females for female roles. What was worse, they were becoming popular. A group of female impersonators, aware of the threat, swarmed out of Nikkatsu led by one of their most popular number, Teinosuke Kinugasa—who, over thirty years later, was to become world famous as the director of *Gate of Hell*. This dramatic exodus left something of a hole in the Nikkatsu ranks, and the new would-be actor, Mizoguchi, was moved into the position of director's assistant. A little later, in 1922, Nikkatsu, still anxious to use what female actors they had left, gave Mizoguchi his first full directorship. And so, ironically, Mizoguchi, who has become famous as the director of women and whose better films are concerned entirely with the problems of women, began his career as a rear-guard apologist for the use of female impersonators.

From then on, Mizoguchi became a very busy director indeed. The period was an important one in the history of Japanese films. New ideas and techniques were occurring every day. Studios were being modernised and talent was greatly needed. Kinugasa, within the year, had become a director at the Makino Studios. The late Minoru Murata began his work, and very shortly afterwards both Ozu and Goshu entered the industry. Mizoguchi himself went from company to company, as most Japanese directors do. In 1932 he left Nikkatsu and entered the Shinkyo Studios in Kyoto; two years later, he left to go to Nikkatsu Tamagawa; and in the same year, along with Masaichi Nagata, currently president of Daiei, he participated in the founding of a small independent company, the Dai-ichi Eigasha. After its break-up in 1936 he joined the Shinkyo Company in Tokyo, and in 1939 he left it to go to work for Shochiku. About the same time he was made a Special Motion Picture Consultant to the cabinet and, in 1940, was elected head of the All-Japan Film Makers League.

In 1942 he became director of the Dai-Nihon Motion Picture Association, and in 1946 a member of the Social Studies Committee of the Ministry of Education. In 1948, exhibiting the usual fluency in overnight switching from an extreme right to an extreme left (and the other way about), he became president of the Ofuna Local of Nichieien, a dominant labour union which controlled film production during this period, at least in certain studios. In 1949 he was again on the right as president of the Japan Motion Picture Directors Association, and he continues to hold this position to date.

He also currently holds a contract with Daiei whereby he is given complete authority, and where the president, his former associate Nagata, has issued standing orders that he be given anything he needs for the making of a picture, no matter the expense. Mizoguchi has become not only the best-known and best-liked director in Japan. He has also, in all probability, become the best.

From the very first he became something of a leader. He was initially very active in introducing foreign story material, and his 1924 *Song of the Mountain Pass*, taken from a Lady Gregory play (which was in turn influenced by Yeats, who was in turn influenced by the Japanese *noh*), began a sort of fad in Japanese film circles. To this he added a Galsworthy adaptation, *The White Lily Mourns*, and, as late as 1935, was still using foreign

material, as in *Maria no O-Yuki* based on Maupassant's "Boule de Suif."

But Mizoguchi did not confine himself exclusively to the Western classics. He started another trend in 1923 with *813*, a perfect copy of an Arsène Lupin novel, and a film that started a cycle of "*Rupinmono*" which still plagues the screen. More detective stories followed, including *The Copper-Coin King*, a picture based on a British novel but lavishly embellished with all sorts of delights which Mizoguchi had observed in American Westerns. Another in the series was the 1924 *Turkeys: Whereabouts Unknown*, in which Hiroshi Inagaki was one of the little boys. Master Inagaki grew up to be king of the *chambara*, and it is his *Miyamoto Musashi* which the West will soon see under the title of *Samurai: The Legend of Musashi*.

A further example of Mizoguchi's eclecticism at this period was *Foggy Harbour*, rich in German-style atmosphere, and based on O'Neill's "Anna Christie." He also briefly succumbed to the charms of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and did an "expressionist" film called *Blood and the Soul* which sank without a ripple.

After 1925 he began to interest himself in films which were more uniquely Japanese in theme, though he reverted from time to time to foreign-inspired products. His early Japanese-style pictures, however, are completely different from those that twenty years later made him world famous. They were all social-realist in manner, always adamantly contemporary and nearly always concerned with a specific social issue. While Mizoguchi did not originate this movement, he contributed to it with the 1925 *Street Sketches*, the slice-of-life technique used in an



"*Ugetsu Monogatari*". Machiko Kyo as the phantom princess Wakasa and Masayuki Mori as Genjuro the potter.



omnibus-type four-part story, and the 1926 *A Paper Doll's Whisper of Spring* in which he gazes long and searchingly at the lower middle-classes, which until this time had been either ignored or sentimentalised.

The movement had strong economic reasons behind it and, at its height, left no one unimplicated. The depression hit Japan several years before it hit Europe and America, and while the blow was not so formidable, it still pushed into public attention an entire section of the population hitherto largely ignored. Overnight, social awareness became a desirable and often necessary quality. Not only were funds no longer available for imitation *Boston Blackies*, sheer entertainment films seemed completely out of keeping with the austere times.

Also, the Russian influence should not be overlooked. Though many Russian films were denied entry into Japan after 1925, those which had been seen were most impressive, and before long the interest in social realism became an interest in proletarian *genre* films. It should be noticed, however, that the Japanese films which this period produced were not attempting to follow any specific "line." Their creators were interested in social problems simply because they concerned other human beings. They were not making the films as examples of political doctrines.

Mizoguchi, during this period, produced his first two really famous films, *Tokyo March* (1929) and *Symphony of the Metropolis* (1929). Both had fairly similar plots, in which the life of a proletarian family is contrasted with its bourgeois counterpart, the connecting links being inter-family love and rivalry. The emphasis in these films is not upon the good proletariat and the bad bourgeois, but upon the good and the bad in both; the films only say "this is the way things are," never "this is the way things ought not to be." Parenthetically, one must observe that the Japanese make very bad propaganda films simply because they find it difficult to think in terms of black and white so far as moral issues go. One of the prize examples is a film made during the recent war in which a Japanese soldier rapes a Chinese girl, after which the sympathies of the script-writer, director and, eventually, audience, were so deeply moved that she ended up being the heroine.

The Japanese government of the period frowned upon the "proletariat" film movement, and eventually decided to do something about it. It seems indicative of the really profound indifference to political motives involved that the film-makers so easily satisfied both themselves and their government. The movement broke into two parts. One part, somewhat singularly, drifted off in the direction of erotic comedy, where it remains to this day. The other and larger part shifted its aim ever so slightly, and instead of purposefully or accidentally suggesting that their heroes would "join the worker's world" made them members of the "lumpenproletariat," that section which the Communist Manifesto so luridly describes as a "passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society," that section which would probably become "a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." Actually the pictures remained much the same because the producers were not interested in revolutionary content; they merely wanted to express the emotional problems involved. At any rate the government was pacified, and a long train of films about life in the lower depths shuffled forward. The movement still shuffles and is now known, collectively, as "rumpen-mono."

By this time, however, Mizoguchi was no longer with it. With characteristic facility he had followed an interest in social realism back to the Meiji period, an era which the films had hitherto viewed through the dim eyes of extreme nostalgia. Originally he had been drawn back to this period both because "it is my favourite period of all,"

and because he had wanted to make a film about the government suppression of the Liberal Party during this formative era in modern Japanese politics. It prevented the filming, but his interest remained in the Meiji era.

## II

At the same time, working in Kyoto at the Shinkyo Studios, he became more deeply interested in the whole area, the Kansai area where he had spent a part of his youth. What particularly interested Mizoguchi was the conflict between the Kansai way of life and that of Tokyo and Yokohama, the Kanto district. Even now there is a vast difference between the two places. Tokyo is all modern and dirty and commercial and fashionable. It looks like Chicago. Kyoto is still old Japan. You can't turn around without hitting a national treasure, and there are more ancient buildings per square foot than any place else in the world. Obviously the Kansai people are completely different from those of the Kanto. Their own dialect, their way of life is much less cosmopolitan, much more provincial, much more leisurely and elegant. Only in the Kansai, and in a few other more isolated regions, are the graces of traditional Japanese living observed.

This Kansai-Kanto conflict had become a dominant theme in Japanese literature of the period, and Tanizaki perhaps best expresses it in his novel "Some Prefer Nettles."

*Elegy* (1936), based on one of his own stories, in which a girl struggles against the growing commercialism of life in Osaka—the old name for which is Naniwa. Then, in the same year, he explored it further in one of his finest films, *Sisters of the Gion*. It is the story of the loving rivalry between two sisters, one "old-fashioned" and the other "modern." It was based upon a story by Mizoguchi himself and proved one of his most popular films.

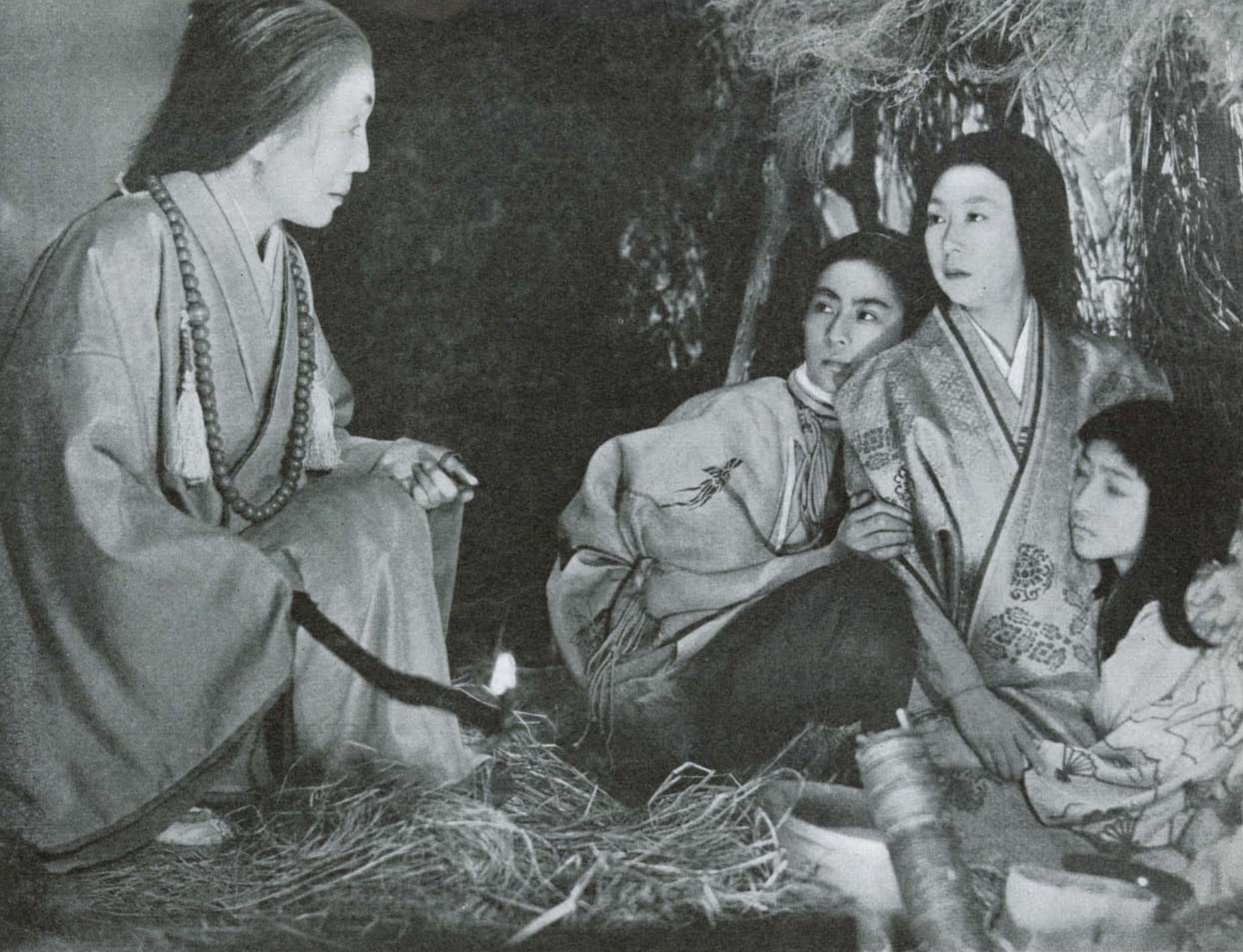
About this time the government was interfering more and more with film production, censoring this and condemning that. The director had already had severe censorship difficulties with both *Tokyo March* and *Symphony of the Metropolis*, as well as the 1926 *No Money—No Fighting*, a satirical film based on a newspaper cartoon serial about a Chinese soldier who refused to fight until he was paid. In 1932 he had made what he has since called a "policy" film in *The Dawn of the Founding of Manchuko and Mongolia*; he now decided not to co-operate any longer.

That Mizoguchi could make this "policy" film the same year that he had made *And Yet They Go On*, a sympathetic though non-revolutionary picture of the proletariat, is indicative not only of the total lack of any political affiliation, but also the supreme indifference with which outside affiliation is viewed. This is not only true of Mizoguchi, it is true of most Japanese. Their historical sense is so refined and their political sense so primitive that they have undeservedly been called political hypocrites.

## III

At the beginning of the war, Mizoguchi decided against "policy" pictures, and was consequently, and somewhat against his will, forced to move from historical period to historical period until he found one far enough distant from the present for the government to let him do what he wanted in it. In this way he directed the really big production of the war, the 1942 *Genroku Chushingura*, which pleased the government (then following a time-honoured pattern and beginning to aggrandize Japanese history) and was supposed to illustrate "true devotion to the Cause." Mizoguchi somewhat uncomfortably moved yet further back in time, and did a *Miyamoto Musashi* (there are dozens in Japanese film history) and one called





"*Sansho Dayu*". The Lady Tamaki (Kinuyo Tanaka, right), fleeing with her children, encounters the priestess (Kikue Mori) in league with the kidnappers.

*Danjuro the Third*, of which he now says: "It was a very bad historical film—let's not talk about it."

The Japanese film industry experienced a great deal of difficulty in adjusting to the postwar situation, and found particularly irksome the Occupation order to avoid any kind of picture which could conceivably be described as undemocratic.

was about female emancipation, and probably pleased the Occupation authorities. His second, *Five Women Around Utamaro*, was based on a non-political episode in the life of the *ukiyo* artist, and Mizoguchi was not allowed to film it until he had convinced the film experts of the occupying Powers that, in a way, it was right in their line—Utamaro was the great common man, adored by the people—and that the whole thing was fairly redolent of democracy.

#### IV

Mizoguchi's films had remained relatively undistinguished for about twelve years. Then, in 1952, he made *The Life of O-Haru*, based on a 17th century novel by Ibara Saikaku. This story of a famous courtesan who eventually became a Buddhist nun was set against the background of a feudal court and of the courtesans'

quarter in Kyoto.

A few years, Mizoguchi has made peculiarly his own—a personal drama placed in a historical epoch, reconstructed with great imaginative detail. *O-Haru* was followed by the now internationally famous *Ugetsu Monogatari*, immediately after which Mizoguchi did a fine remake of *Sisters of the Gion*, *Gionbayashi* (1953).

two more outstanding films, *Sansho Dayu* and the *Chikamatsu Monogatari*. The four historical films, though their feeling for people and places is intimate, are conceived on a large scale, and *Ugetsu*, *Sansho Dayu* and *Chikamatsu* cover many years in time. *Ugetsu*, set in the 16th century during a civil war, follows the adventures of a humble potter who, after his wife is killed by soldiers, is wooed by a phantom princess; *Sansho Dayu*, set in the 11th century, equally a period of civil war, centres on two well-born children who are sold into slavery; and *Chikamatsu* is a tragic tale of two 16th century lovers. Apart from their rich poetic atmosphere and observation, miraculously fresh each time, these films reveal some wider preoccupations—the feudal attitude towards women as courtesans (*O-Haru*) and adulteresses (*Sansho Dayu*), the persistence of a woman's love in the face of all kinds

The first fil





"Yokihi" shown at the Venice Festival this year, Mizoguchi's first film in colour, with Machiko Kyo (left).

of adversity (the murdered wife whose invisible ghost returns to comfort the potter in *Ugetsu*, the mother who never gives up the search for her kidnapped children in *Sansho Dayu*, and the heroine of *Chikamatsu*).

This year Mizoguchi's interest again turned to Chinese history (for he has always had a fondness for the subject, as in the 1935 *Gubijincho*), and he made his first colour film *Yokihi*. At present he continues his new interest in historical films with the *Heika Monogatari*, based on a new version of the ancient story. It looks like the biggest film of the year, and advance publicity for it runs: "*The Greatest Natural Color Movie of the Twentieth Century*." Just how good it is the West will probably have a chance to discover for itself, for from now on most Mizoguchi pictures are scheduled for a world-wide market.

It is commonly supposed that it was only with the exportation of *Ugetsu* that the West discovered Mizoguchi. Actually he had been "discovered" before, in 1928, when his *The Passion of a Woman Teacher* was shown in Europe, and those qualities which made *Ugetsu* such a superb film had already been apparent in his style.

His approach to cinema is definitely literary, in that he either reads or writes a story and then decides to film it. From the very first, with his adaptations of Galsworthy, detective novels and the rest, he has used literature as the basis of film. All of his better-known works are based on novels or stories. *Chikamatsu Monogatari* is based on a Chikamatsu *kabuki*, *Yokihi* is based on a Chinese chronicle poem and its Japanese modernization, and *Ugetsu* is based

on one of Ueda's stories.

Mizoguchi himself rarely writes his own scenarios. The majority of them are the work of Yoda Yoshikata, who began working with the director about 1936. To his credit are the screenplays of every good Mizoguchi film from *Sisters of the Gion* to *Yokihi*.

Lots of atmosphere is what the West has come to expect from Mizoguchi. In fact, some critics have dismissed *Ugetsu* as a mere triumph of *mise-en-scène*. Whether this triumph is merely mere is a moot point, but there is no denying that the atmosphere in Mizoguchi's later films is fairly palpable. In this of course he resembles European directors of two or three decades back, and it is perhaps this insistence upon atmosphere, plus the fact that they are usually historical films, which makes them anachronistic to the contemporary Japanese film scene.

One Japanese critic seems to have said exactly the right thing when he observed that the locale is the real hero of a Mizoguchi film, that the setting very often determines the kind of picture it is, and that the director insists upon the importance of environment to his characters.

This he does in a variety of ways. One of the most important is through long camera set-ups. He has said that he believes single set-ups held for an unusually long time are helpful in creating atmosphere. In *Symphony of the Metropolis* one camera set-up lasts for two thousand feet! The final reel of *Ugetsu* contains only fourteen different camera set-ups.

Mizoguchi has also said that he thinks the long shot



is very effective in obtaining what he wants. This is undoubtedly quite true. In *Ugetsu* the scenes in the enchanted mansion are often shot from across a courtyard, and the charming scene on the lawn is prefaced with an extraordinarily beautiful long shot. The flight of the lovers in *Chikamatsu Monogatari* is often shot from a great height, and the scene in the peach-blossom garden in *Yokichi* (one of the most beautiful in this pictorially gorgeous film) is filmed from very far away indeed.

The final scene of *Ugetsu* is a very fine example of the way Mizoguchi uses camera movement to evoke atmosphere. The child places the food on his mother's grave; and then, with the gentlest of movements, the camera begins to climb, until finally the entire little settlement on the shores of the lake is seen, in a shot which matches the opening of the film with its slow pan from lake to houses.

Another superb example of controlled camera movement is in the opening scenes of *Yokichi*, where the camera, which has been wandering through the halls of the palace, turns toward a gold gauze curtain. A breeze moves the gauze slightly and the camera tracks along beside it. Distant figures are seen through it as the breeze blows the gauze away from the camera more and more. Finally it lifts, and discloses the emperor performing with his court musicians, the court itself composed around him. The effect when seen is simply magical; it is so obviously right, so obviously the way to begin a legend.

Mizoguchi's other distinguishing feature is his treatment of women. There have been very few films, except the "policy" movies, in which the director's distinctive treatment of women has not been noted. Mizoguchi's interest, however, is a very particular one, and it takes the form of what we might call a favourite myth.

Every director—actually every creator of any kind—has a favourite myth. Carné's favourite is love betrayed. John Huston's is man against himself. Von Stroheim's is that money causes corruption. John Ford's (despite *The Long Gray Line*) is that man loses in any battle against society. Actually, any statement of these governing myths is a damaging generalization, but Mizoguchi's work is so little known outside Japan that the elaboration may be helpful.

His favourite myth, and one which appears at the core of most of his films, is this: a man's soul is saved by a woman's love. This is the myth of *Ugetsu* and, more particularly, of *Yokichi*. The *Chikamatsu Monogatari* seems to be concerned with the opposite, until it is understood that neither man nor woman had any purpose in life before their illicit affair—with her love, and the resultant adversity, came fulfillment. This myth has appeared in most of his work since the beginning; but it was not until the 1937 film, *The Straits of Love and Hate*, that it became a truly distinguishing factor.

Mizoguchi himself has called this film "a modern Katasha story" and the reference is to the heroine of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* who is saved by a man who, through his attentions to her, saves himself. The Japanese use category-tags a great deal; and any critic calling, say, a Bette Davis film "a Katasha story" would be perfectly understood.

Thus Mizoguchi's myth has not only a private meaning to himself, it also has public currency—particularly since the "Katasha-type" is found not only in *kabuki* but also in *noh*, where the female ghost or demon is forever saving or damning the man.

This is essentially a literary theme; and, Mizoguchi himself admits, he is essentially a literary man. His reading habits, however, do not give much indication of his films. His favourite is Bernard Shaw, but he also likes Sinclair

Lewis and Balzac. His favourite Japanese author is Nagai, who writes only of prostitutes and, in fact, has made such a house his permanent place of residence.

Mizoguchi doesn't go to the movies very much; he does like William Wyler and his favourite Wyler film is, of all things, *Detective Story*. Not so long ago he went to see *The Long Gray Line*, and after the showing said he had merely gone to see CinemaScope which, it turned out, he liked, but only because the proportions reminded him of a big painting, and he still likes painting. He also recently went to see Claude Autant-Lara's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, but didn't much like it, saying that he thought the film and novel were widely different, and that, since his interests were mainly literary, he had wondered how a book like the Stendhal would be treated.

While the films of other directors, even other Japanese directors, seem not to have influenced him at all, it would be interesting to know if he ever saw the 1921 Japanese film *Obscenity of the Viper*, based on the same story he used in *Ugetsu*. The film no longer exists, but stills from it do, and they show considerable atmosphere, including very advanced lighting and some camera set-ups almost identical to those used in the later film. The movie, incidentally, was the work of Thomas Kurihara, the man who had been a cameraman in the Ince West Coast studios, but there is no record that Mizoguchi ever even met him.

At present Mizoguchi is living a quiet but industrious life, which includes about two features a year and ample time for thought and relaxation. He lives the kind of life that successful directors used to live before there were quotas to be filled and different sized screens to be discussed. He approaches his art as a craft, and he polishes and polishes his product before he releases it. He is aware that he is something of an anomaly even on the Japanese film scene, and seems to like the idea.

Recently he said, in answer to someone who remarked that it was curious that he had forgotten how many films he had made, had completely forgotten ever making some of them: "Oh, yes, but I remember my first day in the studio perfectly. I was a flunkie, that's all, but at the end of that day, I thought—this is good work for me."



Kenji Mizoguchi inspects a detail on the costume of one of his actors in his latest film, "Heika Monogatari".









# Four Directors

## Claude Autant-Lara

rehearses Danielle Darrieux in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, his film of Stendhal's novel, in which Gérard Philipe plays Julien Sorel. (Top left)

## Max Ophüls

on a characteristic location, prepares a scene for *Lola Montès*, his first CinemaScope film, in which Martine Carol plays the famous dancer. (Left)

## Abel Gance

with an actor on the set of *La Tour de Nesle*, his splendidly flamboyant Gevacolour version of the play by Dumas. (Above)

## René Clair

with Michèle Morgan during the shooting of his new comedy with a Don Juan theme, *Les Grandes Manœuvres*. The leading actor is Gérard Philipe. (Right)







## PEOPLE OF TALENT (3)

# Agnes Moorehead

ONE'S first reaction, in 1941, was to want to see her—in an enormous part—on the stage. (A few years later it seemed the wish was to be gratified; but the Drama Quartet—for which, with Charles Laughton, Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Charles Boyer, she read “Don Juan in Hell”—inexplicably toured England without reaching London.)

such an immediate and permanent impression on the screen in a part lasting only a few minutes; but Agnes Moorehead in *Citizen Kane*, a film replete with virtuoso acting, indelibly established herself.

As the obscure mother of the boy who is to be adopted and to grow up as Charles Foster Kane, she created a figure of beautiful and melancholy vividness. The child

is playing in the snow; the mother opens the window to call him in to meet his benefactor. There is a pause before she calls his name, and in that pause a crucial moment of life is conveyed, many years of experience are suddenly mirrored, past, present and future meet for an instant of revelation.

This kind of subtlety, forceful and far-reaching, stamped Agnes Moorehead as an actress of rare, exciting imagination. A year later, Orson Welles in *The Magnificent Ambersons* gave her a role that confirmed the scope of her talents. The lonely, hysterical, inescapably spinsterish Aunt Fanny became, in her performance, like a character in a classic novel. This extraordinary power—of developing a complete, full character, of extracting the secret from the moment, of judging and placing the personality she is playing, so that we see it in embracing perspective—has never been allowed, in succeeding films, to be so richly displayed. The face of Aunt Fanny at the funeral, rigid and blackened with grief; the face of Aunt Fanny as her nephew George compliments her on her strawberry shortcake, the mouth contracting to a thin, nervous line that masks the smile of bitter pride, the ironic realisation that this, indeed, is the only kind of compliment poor Aunt Fanny is ever likely to receive; the face of Aunt Fanny quivering with rage, self-pity, desperation, as her voice shrilly recounts the years of mockery and shrugging tolerance she has endured—in this unique performance the experience communicated miraculously suggests a whole life, from childhood to old age.

In the fifteen years since her first appearance, Agnes Moorehead has made more than twenty films. By no means all of them have been rewarding, but at the least her incisiveness of attack has meant that brief roles which might in other hands have become conventional ‘cameos’ remain in the memory as swiftly real. Her eccentrics, the traveller of *Journey into Fear*, the antique dealer of *The Great Sinner*, the almost embalmed centenarian of *The Lost Moment* (that weirdly misguided adaptation of Henry James’s “The Aspern Papers”), have always had a distinctive flavour of their own. Equally, she has surprised us with characterisations of almost overwhelming gentleness and charm: the controlled and humorous pathos of her family portrait in *Summer Holiday*—with its delicious moment when she joins in the “Stanley Steamer Song”—the mother of *Our Vines Have Tender Grapes*, the infinitely tactful nurse-companion of *Magnificent Obsession*. In knife-edge contrast is the wholly individual variation on the American thriller’s theme of the treacherous vamp in *The Dark Passage*; here, a disturbing sexual menace in black trousers, she proved more than a match for the wry, experienced Bogart, and reminded one of that classic exchange between Mr. Gutmann and Sam Spade, à propos Brigid O’Shaughnessy, in *The Maltese Falcon*. (“Dangerous?” “Very. . . .”)

Of her films in the last few years, it has been *Fourteen Hours* that afforded her the most memorable opportunities. As the violently possessive mother of the would-be suicide, she stroked in the character’s damaging, ruthless neurosis with a superb first entrance. Disdaining (yet relishing) the interest of reporters, she hurries along the hotel corridor, makes rapidly for the bedroom window, and in chillingly honeyed and hysterical accents begins to plead with her son, the words unconsciously calculated ~~There~~ to can have humiliate and distress him. Here again her wonderful faculty of making everything count—walk, gesture, expression, intonation—is breathtakingly demonstrated, and the first scene between mother and son becomes an infallible disclosure of their whole relationship. This instinct for the whole truth of a situation is the signature of a fascinating and audacious talent.



# Film Reviews

## FRENCH CANCAN

AS SLOWLY receding view of the illuminated Moulin Rouge, as if returning to its fabulous past, disappears; echoes of an exultant triumph within gradually fade; *French Cancan* (Miracle) has reached its fittingly dream-like end. The story of some legendary show people and of the great show they put on has been well told, but the overwhelming impression left by this picture is of a perfect, an enchanted evocation of the very spirit of showmanship. In *La Grande Illusion* and *La Règle du Jeu*, in *The Southerner* and *The River*, Jean Renoir, magnificently at his best, developed large themes. With *French Cancan* he has renewed his style, creating a masterpiece on a light theme, in which his wise and humorous perception is combined with new brilliance and charm. A charm that is very personal, for the inspiration of this film seems to be the fascinating charm for *him* of show folk and their world. And how marvellously he has caught it!

Described on its gay, poster-style credit titles as a musical comedy, the film is actually composed in colour sequences rather than musical ones. It opens flamboyantly with Maria Felix as the notorious Belle Abbess doing an oriental dance in a fashionable variety hall, full of rich hues, black and white predominating. In the cheap dance hall where Jean Gabin, as an impresario with a flair for developing young talent, meets Françoise Arnoul, the pretty laundress Nini whom he later transforms into a cancan star, the colours are lighter, brought here and there into relief by ink blue, and the range is simpler. One image of a grave little wallflower dressed in green introduces a contrasting shade. Similarly, two indescribably funny scenes in which the arch-seductress Belle Abbess receives her admirers reclining on an enormous crimson couch, serve as vivid counterpoints in the film's general composition. Particularly successful is the sequence gradually made up in pinks: Prince Charming comes to Montmartre with some roses for Nini; they sit under a nearby tree, screened by a fluttering line of washing, and he declares his love; his roses, her dress, the tree blossoms, but nothing else, are in delicate pinks, matching the exquisite delicacy of the scene. Art director Max Douy and lighting cameraman Michel Kelber have excelled themselves.

The story is carried swiftly forward by the excitement of an idea—the impresario's dual idea of building the Moulin Rouge as a centre of "high life for small purses" and of opening it with a revival of the long-forgotten cancan. Training, construction and some incidental destruction proceed apace. Taught by a splendid veteran, Lydia Jeanson, a troupe of girls learn what it takes in grit and toil to do splits and high kicks in true cancan style. At the ceremonial laying of the Moulin Rouge foundations, La Belle Abbess, suspecting Nini of being a rival, starts a fight: counter-attacks follow attacks with a mad logic that makes nonsense of fighting itself and of everything save the wit of the scene—which ends as the band forlornly strikes up a dignified tune. Intrigues are overcome, backers placated, and all the time the panorama of Montmartre is kept alive as the *quartier* to which the show people belong together with the chattering washerwomen, the *blasé* pickpockets, the idealistic young baker. One magical evening Nini, who will never leave this quarter, takes the prince (Giani Esposito), who can never belong to it, on a grand tour of the famous night spots, all different, all part of the variety tradition she has adopted.

By the time the story reaches the opening gala of the Moulin Rouge, the building itself, glittering with brave ostentation, stands as a symbol of this tradition. The red and pink hall,

filled with all kinds of people from Montmartre and far beyond, including some Russian sailors on shore leave from Brest who are made graciously welcome, is a mass of colour and excitement. And yet it looks subdued compared with the brilliant figures on and behind the stage and with the fire that animates them. The whistling clown (Pierre Olaf) renders a melody full of pathos; Anna Amendola follows with a haunting street song; and, after one last explosion of jealousy backstage, which all but wrecks the show, the cancan girls burst into the hall from every direction, leaping over tables, involving the public in the wild exuberance of their performance. Alone behind the scenes Jean Gabin listens; shouts of delight greet each volley of high kicks as the girls dance forward, flourishing their lace petticoats, row upon row and over again; the clamour increases, and, smiling, he stays there to enjoy the *sounds of success*.

In *French Cancan*, then, Jean Renoir has achieved a wonderful blend of stylisation and reality, of poetic expression and robust showmanship. Several sequences—in the noisy market, for instance, or the romantic episodes—are pure picture-book fairyland in all save the natural simplicity of the acting, thanks to which the characters always remain real. In the comedy scenes, on the other hand, like the foundation ceremony or the rendezvous in Maria Felix's boudoir, the background is realistic and the action, both individually and as a whole, stylised, but performed with such sincere gusto that credibility is never interrupted. Unlike *Le Carrosse d'Or*, in which Jean Renoir had already presented a larger-than-life story of show people, but without achieving unity of style, this film is of a piece. It repays study, as much for the original use of each of the cinema's component elements—acting, colour, sound, design—as for the success with which these and the stylistic variations have been integrated. Above all, it is a picture to see, without a critic's notebook, as a rare pleasure.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE.

## ROMEO AND JULIET

THE new Russian ballet film of *Romeo and Juliet* (Gala), to be shown in London soon, is fascinating from many points of view. As the presentation of a full-length ballet on the screen, with music by Prokofiev, choreography by Lavrovsky, and Ulanova as Juliet, it is a transposition with impressive credentials—not "cinematic" (in the Powell-Pressburger sense) but unusually resourceful in its deployment of camera and cutting, often in its sets, to extend and heighten theatrical effects. The original work, apparently nearly an hour longer on the stage, suffers from a few disadvantages inherent in its tradition; there are some episodes of plot, such as the wedding, Friar Laurence's explanation of the "poison" when Juliet comes to beg for his help, that cannot be satisfactorily expressed by dancing, and are reduced to dumb-show—reinforced, in the film, by a commentary. The final scene on the tomb is also a formidable challenge to a choreographer's invention, and Lavrovsky has met it disappointingly. On the screen, perhaps, the limitations of ballet as narrative art show up more immediately; and while the directors, Lev Arnstam\* and Lavrovsky himself, have been content to accept these limitations, they have created a film often rich in beautiful and exciting movement.

The Verona is not Italianate, but has its own legendary quality. In its exteriors, the ancient town with its wide market square, colonnades, flights of steps, oriental-looking streets lined with stalls, and a huge, rugged range of mountains encircling it, is distinctly Caucasian in atmosphere. The townspeople in

\* Arnstam is an interesting lesser-known personality of the Soviet cinema. Born in 1905, he was an outstanding concert pianist in his 20's, then turned to writing. With the arrival of sound, he became interested in the cinema, and wrote the scenario for the Ermler-Youtkevich *Counterplan* (1932), an important early Soviet sound film. In 1935 his *Girl Friends* made the actress Zoya Federova famous, and in 1944 his war story *Zoya* was shown in this country. His biography *Glinka* (1947) was highly praised in Russia, but never exported. Arnstam has usually written and directed his own films; no doubt his broad cultural background, especially his musicianship, is vital to the superiority of *Romeo and Juliet* over other recent Russian ballet films (*Trio Ballet*, *Concert of Stars*, etc.).





"Romeo and Juliet" : Ulanova and Y. Jdanov.

the crowd scenes remind one of *Sadko*. While the costumes at the Capulet ball are courtly and elaborate, their subdued, sombre tints of dark red and brown have no Renaissance glow but a fascinating, wintry remoteness. (It is a pity that the interior settings do not achieve consistency of style; while the palace ballroom is strikingly successful in its sober but dramatic colour and design, Juliet's bedroom looks too like a faded theatrical print.) At their best, the images finely match Prokofiev's music—which, in its opulence of orchestral texture, its rhythmic variety (the heavy, insistent, almost dirge-like theme for the "Cushion Dance" at the ball is an extraordinary *tour de force*) and its occasionally unexpected use of solo instruments, notably the saxophone, seems to have all the ideal qualities of a ballet score: sensuous appeal and subtle dramatic instinct.

The crowd scenes are spectacularly inventive and brilliant. The duels in the market square, the death of Mercutio, the introduction of a carnival element—clowns, tumblers, a jesting Death, performing some characteristic Russian leaps—the sudden vengeful fury of Lady Capulet over Tybalt's body, are staged with exhilarating force and some virtuoso crane movements by the camera; and the whole ballroom sequence—the "Cushion Dance," the masked entry of Romeo, his pursuit of Juliet, her unwilling dance with Paris—is beautifully composed. While the lovers' passages are uneven, there are moments of exquisite delicacy, most of all in the ecstatic flight of imagination during the balcony scene, when their figures are dissolved through to a *pas de deux* against a vague nocturnal backdrop, dim shapes of mountains in the distance and soft oases of light on the grey expanse of floor. The camera records this dance with perfect fluidity. The film also creates an imaginative

moment in its own right; Juliet's terror on the night before her wedding to Paris, her sudden flight through the palace, her white figure hurrying through dark corridors and down shadowed flights of steps.

There remains Ulanova. At her first appearance—rather sexlessly, unflatteringly dressed in white, and an unfortunately choreographed scene with the Nurse in which her skittish movements only serve to emphasise a lack of youth—one is disconcerted. But when the choreography ceases to pretend that she is a young girl, the marvellous lyric power of the dancer takes over, and one is continually held by her lovely poetic grace. The Romeo (Y. Jdanov) is excellent, sympathetic, if a little heavy in appearance, and there is a superb, captivating Mercutio (S. Koren).

GAVIN LAMBERT.

## CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

ORSON WELLES casts such a gigantic shadow that it becomes difficult to realise that in fact only six films (five if one chooses to discount the equivocal *Journey into Fear*) stand between the dazzling pyrotechnics of *Citizen Kane* and the choked and spluttering deadwood bonfire that is *Confidential Report* (Warners). Fuelled with reminiscences of *Kane*—the fascination with the mystery and the apparatus of power, the involved flashback structure—and stoked up with bits from *The Third Man*, from the spectacular seediness of the world of Harry Lime, this is a grandiose and ornate melodramatic construction. But beneath the baroque extravagance of its style, and the characteristic romantic retreat from reality into another Xanadu, the film crumbles emptily away. With *Kane*,



Welles' especial genius was to persuade us that he was telling the story in the only way possible. Here, one early develops the uneasy conviction that the film-maker is saying nothing in particular, for all that he is undeniably saying it at the top of his voice.

Gregory Arkadin, the central character of the story, is a sort of Harry Lime grown respectable, an adventurer dealing in millions. He owns a castle in Spain, a retinue of poker-faced secretaries and a daughter to whom he is aggressively devoted; and if at the outset of the picture he seems merely the conventional mystery-financier of the old-fashioned romantic thriller, the revelation that he can remember nothing of his early career suggests that the search for the past will develop also into a search for the "real" Arkadin. But the shady young American hired by Arkadin to investigate his own origins has, in fact, been engaged merely to track down members of the white-slaving gang to which he once discredibly belonged. The expected mystery belongs not to the past but to the present, in Arkadin's relentless determination to obliterate his record through the murder of his old associates. And the gallery of grotesque characters encountered by the American in his wanderings across the world are leading us not towards Arkadin, who remains elusive, but into the tangled thickets of a fairly conventional exercise in melodramatic double-crossing.

Welles, inevitably, embroiders this with all the hocus-pocus of the practised illusionist. The elaborate maze of flashbacks; the tilted camera and the extravagant camera angles; the huge and shadowy sets, transforming the castle in Spain into an ogre's gothic palace; the broken sentences, the overlapping dialogue, the sudden jagged burst of sound at a party, are all by now familiar elements in the Wellesian sleight of hand. There is a scene that seems quintessential *Kane*, with a millionaire's secretary descending from her employer's Alpine stronghold to read a blandly diplomatic statement about Arkadin to the investigator; with almost surrealist abandon, the financier's henchmen, equipped with bowler hats and field glasses, scuttle from behind the trees to spy on his daughter and the American; and a murder on the waterfront, all lurching figures, shadows and intriguing confusion, provides a bravura introduction to the adventure. Where the material is second-hand, though, all this obsessive technical display can merely expend itself purposelessly, and the story disintegrates under it.

As *Lady From Shanghai* (a more substantial and entertaining film than this) has already sufficiently demonstrated, Welles' attitude to melodrama is fundamentally at the opposite extreme from that of Hitchcock. Where Hitchcock turns the commonplace upside down, allowing charwomen to carry revolvers and commercial travellers to dismember their wives, Welles appears to be drawn to melodrama by the opportunities it affords for

eccentric and romantic characterisation. The young American (Robert Arden), his girl friend (Patricia Medina) and Arkadin's daughter (Paola Mori) are the most overtly normal characters in *Confidential Report*, and they are played, in the first two cases at least, with an almost blatant lack of style or distinction. It is in Michael Redgrave's spurious old antique dealer, in Peter Van Eyck's shabby racketeer, in the brittle tension of Suzanne Flon's playing as the Polish baroness and, notably, the magnetic authority of Katina Paxinou's brief and splendid appearance as Sophie, the gang leader in retirement, that one again realises the superlative chances that Welles can still brilliantly offer to players equipped to take them. That he does not himself make a great deal of Arkadin is perhaps inherent in the conception of the character; conscientiously a man of mystery, Arkadin remains for most of the film a formidable shadow, a man figuratively, if not after his first appearance actually, behind a mask. That, ultimately, is rather the impression that these restless and baffling melodramatics give one of Welles himself. The talent itself is still one immensely to be reckoned with; it remains for the heavy-weight director again to take on something his own size.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

## THE CRIMINAL LIFE OF ARCHIBALDO DE LA CRUZ

THIS, so Bunuel told me, is a typical Mexican "quickie"—shot on a low budget (fantastically low by our inflated standards) and completed, floor shooting and location, in less than four weeks. His own attitude to this film, shown during the season of his work at the National Film Theatre, was remote; but this seemed to apply to almost any other film of his which was mentioned. So Defoe, to whom (and not just because of *Crusoe*) Bunuel may well be compared, might have reacted to comments on *Roxana* or the *Journal of the Plague Year*.

*Archibaldo*, however, is in many respects a very remarkable film. It is a *comédie noire* in which the director may have taken himself more seriously than he originally intended. Like all Bunuel's films, it maintains an identity of atmosphere from beginning to end, and in its crucial moments produces the horror which lies behind the farces of life and human behaviour. Viewed in relation to the canon of his work, this film confirms a growing belief that the so-called iconoclasm of *L'Age d'Or*, and the apparently deliberate shock-tactics in many of his films, represent in fact a quite simple outlook on life—the philosophy, in fact, of Luis Bunuel. It is noteworthy that the opening sequence of his frank and brutal documentary *Land Without Bread* is similar in many respects to the open-

"*Confidential Report*": the flea-trainer (Mischa Auer), the retired gang-leader (Katina Paxinou) and the antique dealer (Michael Redgrave) are among the characters encountered during the search for Arkadin's past.







Katharine Hepburn in "Summer Madness"

ing of *L'Age d'Or*. But *Land Without Bread* was made later.

I would suspect—no, I believe—that Bunuel is a very simple man who expresses himself according to his beliefs about human beings and their behaviour. He would not accept Gide's Lafcadio, but he would create the same character in his own terms; and the *acte gratuite* would become a piece of Bunuel *reportage*.

A cart goes through a drawing room during a diplomatic reception: a Mexican juvenile delinquent has an appalling nightmare: Robinson Crusoe fights for his own soul with an echo in a valley; and Archibaldo de la Cruz, balked yet again of his conviction that he is a murderer of women, melts a life-size wax effigy of his victim in the furnace which he uses for firing his ceramics. Horrible, logical, fitting the pattern which Bunuel sets.

So the reason why *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz* does not look like a Mexican quickie is simply that Bunuel has filmed one of his ideas; and because he has a supremely logical mind, he has stripped his story of everything except those images which truly concern the matter in hand. You may not agree with the original idea—but you are bound to admire the absolute integrity with which it is carried out in movie terms.

It is the screen image which counts; and Bunuel, often unpredictably, is a master of the screen image. All through this film the camera is placed, casually but correctly, in the *obvious* position. We are a million miles from Orson Welles, whose positions are only obvious because you know that only Welles would have chosen them. Anyone could choose a Bunuel camera-angle, but few could match him in the building-

up of a sequence. He uses a sharp knife. He has never handled a bludgeon.

This is what makes *Archibaldo* so fascinating. It expresses one simple story idea. It goes straight ahead, sequence by sequence, and it never loiters or takes a wrong turning. It isn't a deep psychological drama and it isn't a whodunit. It just says, "supposing a small boy grows up to think that he is *literally* a lady-killer—all because his governess is shot dead before his eyes while he is playing an elaborate musical box given him by his rich and doting parents." . . . Well, just supposing. And Bunuel goes right ahead and supposes. That poor chap Archibaldo goes on trying to kill women, and fate and/or coincidence always forestall him. It is pathetic and funny, and in a curious way true; because we are all of us trying all the time to adjust our secret personal life to the life we have to lead, and, however *outré* the plot of this particular film may be, Bunuel's knife is bound to tickle our ribs.

In this case he is very well served by his cameraman, Augustin Jimenez, and by an admirable cast, including Ernesto Alonso as Archibaldo and Miroslava as a *femme fatale* in two senses. And the sets are exceptionally good.

BASIL WRIGHT.

## SUMMER MADNESS & THE DEEP BLUE SEA

AT FIRST it may seem unfair to review these two Anglo-American productions together. *Summer Madness* (London Films International) is obviously in many respects superior to *The Deep Blue Sea* (Fox); yet, on reflection, a vital failing



links them. Both films are unequal to the emotional demands and implications of their subjects—and for the same reason; they prevaricate, they evade, and their ultimate refuge is the commonplace.

*Summer Madness*, adapted by David Lean and H. E. Bates from an American play by Arthur Laurents with a better title, *The Time of the Cuckoo*, is a Henry James story in modern dress. The innocent American pays her first visit to guilty Europe. On vacation in Venice, the lonely, resilient private secretary is beguiled, seduced, betrayed. The agent of destruction is a Venetian art dealer—married, of course. At first she is stunned and indignant at the revelation that he is the father of two children, then she weakens. An idyll follows, and a renunciation. She rushes back to conventional solitude in New York, and as the train steams out of the station Renato runs up and throws her a gardenia—symbol of a lost but always remembered adolescent infatuation.

If the original play wasted too much time on background sketches of other boarders at the Pensione where Jane Hudson is staying, much of its writing had a dry, shrewd insight; and it made two interesting points. Jane was emphatically middle-aged and plain, so that (in Shirley Booth's wonderful performance) her loneliness, her craving for love, had a special urgency and pathos. Laurents' Italian was also middle-aged—aristocratic, "distinguished," and in his own way equally lonely. So, the play suggested, this mutual desire for love took on the aspect of a last, secretly anguished hope; and, in this particular case, it was both kindled and extinguished by the impact of American and European codes upon each other. The Italian had his reserve of practical cynicism, of inbred hedonism, which enabled him to seduce the puritan tourist, but which finally alarmed and repelled her. A romantic, she wanted the perfect permanent relationship or nothing.

The film has been rewritten and directed through English eyes. It offers a rich, sometimes dazzling surface, with its fine Venice locations, but its conception seems tentative. To begin with, it has substituted Katharine Hepburn for Shirley Booth. Hepburn is a brilliant actress, but by temperament unable to give so keen an edge to the situation of being frustrated, unloved, defenceless; and a too *chic* wardrobe loses the contrast of the fading American and the glittering, legendary beauty of Venice. She plays every scene with characteristic attack and insight, and never flinches from the implications of the part—but she is often simply too fascinating. Also, in this situation, there is a good deal of difference between the ages of, say, forty-one and forty-seven.

Perhaps this would have mattered less if the rewriting had discovered new aspects of the situation; but it has only conventionalised it. As played by Rossano Brazzi, the lover now is handsome, romantic and, one imagines, eminently capable of consoling himself for an estranged wife. Why does he so firmly pursue this unpromising American tourist who seems so much more interested in her 16mm. movie camera? With the answer comes the revelation of a disappointingly banal sentimentality at the core of the film. The relationship is to emerge as another kind of *Brief Encounter*, a tender, impossible idyll with a catch in both throats. Accused of treachery Renato has a persuasive speech about beggars not being able to be choosers, and one anticipates some ironic truth to follow. But the tone quickly works against this—she succumbs, if you please, while a firework display is crosscut in the sky; and in the exquisite early morning light she leaves him, waving gaily and smiling from a gondola as it glides away from San Marco. Which is hardly the reaction, one feels, of a nervous spinster after her first night of love, especially with that vulgar "symbolic" accompaniment.

So the original outlines are blurred. The meeting of opposed temperaments, of American and European solitude, becomes the altogether more ordinary affair of a tourist falling in love with a married foreigner, against pretty dawn-to-dusk Venice locations, and knowing it can't go on and she has to get back home. The renunciation is, even on its own level, weakly motivated—but perhaps it was better prepared for in the original script, since *Summer Madness* bears the signs of considerable cutting. At other points, notably the artist couple at the pensione who have suddenly quarrelled, the manageress

revealed in the middle of a sinister but inconclusive liaison, there are equally abrupt transitions. Some of the additional scenes, too, are questionable. Jane's loneliness is at first assuaged by an eager, sly, charming urchin, excellently played but not a Venetian figure at all, a child found in Milan or Rome; and, on the fringe, is the surprisingly crude caricature of an American tourist couple.

The failure is not, certainly, without compensations. In the early sequences, both Lean and Hepburn cleverly, acutely convey the tourist's isolation in a beautiful city—the diffident backchat with other guests at the pensione, the wandering around, the shop-gazing and time-killing, the moments of curiosity and panic. These are admirably observed—and the sense of place is often vividly real. By the device of making Jane an amateur movie photographer, the audience at times becomes the tourist's eye, and the whole texture of impressions reflects an enthusiastic response to the magic of this extraordinary city. The camera explores not only the more obviously lyrical canals and gondolas, or an orchestral concert at night in the Piazza San Marco, but the furtive labyrinthine alleyways, the tall murky façades of buildings that are not churches or palazzos. With impeccable craftsmanship Lean has contrived a film of eye-catching imagery, and the Eastman-colour photography (by Jack Hildyard) is beautifully sensitive to light and tone. This surface, the talent of Hepburn, and a few crisply written moments preserved from the play, ensure that the film emerges as Lean's most interesting for some time. Yet it remains disturbingly lacking in genuine style. Committed, after all, by its subject to make a comment on human relations, it declines at each essential point to do so.

If *Summer Madness* is (potentially) Henry James in modern dress, *The Deep Blue Sea* seems to aim at a kind of "Anna Karenina" of the wrong part of S.W.3. A woman leaves her cold though correct and thoughtful husband for a lover, and after a few months discovers she loves him more than he loves her. Terence Rattigan's play explores this situation in the few hours that elapse between Hester Collyer's attempted suicide, which convinces Freddy that their relationship cannot continue, and her decision to remake a new life alone. This Anna, though she does not return to her husband, lives.

The best element in the play is the portrait of Freddy Page, breezily charming, in some ways childishly dependent, an emotional coward unwilling to accept the responsibility of a passionate relationship. Kenneth More plays this part again in the film, and though the performance has been at times unnecessarily broadened, it still has impressive validity, most of all in his reaction to Hester's suicide note and drunken taunting of her. But the rest is much less satisfactory. On the stage, Peggy Ashcroft almost succeeded in disguising the fact



"My Sister Eileen": Robert Fosse and Tommy Rall in an acrobatic dance number.



that Hester is too superficially observed, a compound of attitudes rather than a living person. There is some glib dialogue about the difference between physical and spiritual love, but the writing withdraws before the necessity of explaining the physical-spiritual balance in this case and so giving the relationship individuality. On the broadest level, one supposes, Hester wants an over-riding passionate attachment that will atone for her fall from social grace and luxury—happiness in the shabby two-room flat should be enough in itself. But (as in *Summer Madness*) reality fails the ideal. The trouble is that Rattigan never reveals the kind of woman he thinks Hester is. Is she really intolerably possessive and demanding, an Emma Bovary who will never be satisfied, or is she more like Anna, a generous creature unlucky enough to find someone with selfish responses? Vivien Leigh's performance suggests, if anything, the former; this is a brittle, too poised and calculating characterisation, which at times actually loses sympathy and never conveys the desperation of love.

Adapting his own play, Rattigan has developed the sketches of other tenants in the apartment house (doctor struck off register for illegal practices and now a bookmaker, but gruffly wise about human problems, inquisitive, matey chorusgirl in comically vulgar kimono, etc.), and used flashbacks for descriptions of Hester's married life and her first meetings with Freddy. These allow for some new locations (the law courts, the Farnborough air show, a ski-ing resort) but nothing more, for the writing is tired and unilluminating. He also adds a distracting final sequence in which Hester searches for Freddy through the pubs and clubs of a Soho that one thought had gone out of British films in 1935.

This time an American director is handling a British play. Anatole Litvak brings a rather heavy slickness to it, using the CinemaScope frame with ingenuity, unsuitable though it is to the subject; and the lack of personal style is even more strongly felt. The drama does not seem to be happening anywhere. But the oddest thing about these two films is their retreat from the issues they raise. Both are concerned, among other things, with individuals at odds with their environment. The heroine in each is obsessed by a hunger for love which cannot be satisfied by marriage, which is obstructed by social or national barriers. Such a situation demands an attitude, an exploration, on the film-maker's part, for human beings are to be observed within a particular society, rebelling against it and then obliged to come to terms with it. Questions of varying skills and performances apart, what have the films to say about the matter? Are the characters intended to be their own or society's victims? What are the conditions of modern life that produce

these sad, unsatisfied, lonely creatures? Do the film-makers themselves feel especially aware of existing barriers in the way of human love? How do these things arrive—the hungers and sudden feasts that so bitterly fail to satisfy the underlying pangs? After seeing *Summer Madness* and *The Deep Blue Sea*, such questions remain unanswered; the real, the wider gesture is never made.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

## MY SISTER EILEEN

THE blasting of a new subway which regularly rocks the basement flat where two impecunious out-of-town sisters are living; door knobs that come off in your hand; plaster that falls into the only plate of food in the house; beds like rocks and streetlamps that blind through curtainless windows all through the night—all these can, of course, be fashioned into the stuff of comedy. But when one's principal reaction is a sinking dismay at these domestic disasters, it generally implies a miscalculation of tone. And when Betty Garrett's performance as the unattractive literary sister to the much-courted Eileen causes one's mind morosely to dwell on the wretched aspects of being unwanted, it also indicates that the actress is playing too seriously for the wrong sort of sympathy in these particular comedy circumstances. One is left regretting the 1942 screen performance of Rosalind Russell in the role, and also her New York appearance in *Wonderful Town*, the stage musical version of the play, with its exhilarating and witty musical score so far superior to this present film one. Where Miss Garrett is rueful, Miss Russell is tart; her observations on life on the shelf have a cutting edge more acceptable than Miss Garrett's down-beat submission to it.

What then has prevented Richard Quine, a director who has in the past shown a fine relish for the grisly moment (in *All Ashore* a character remarks of the pianist that it is amazing what he can do with only two hands; the next shot casually records the player's six fingers), from investing much of *My Sister Eileen* with any compelling vitality? Certainly a more audacious adaptation of the stage play would have been an initial step in the right direction. The locale, wherein the string of basement disasters punctuates the thematic harping on the subject of the sisters' varying appeal, is said to be Greenwich Village. But this Greenwich village, for all its glimpses of models posing, and the various training noises of the great artists of tomorrow, is a discreet and even a prim neighbourhood. On the town, in setting and treatment the obvious grandfather of *My Sister Eileen*, wrested something genuinely vital from the city it extolled, something lusty and predatory and clamorously young. The gentle naturalism of much of *My Sister Eileen* seems, in atmosphere, located nowhere in particular, and lacks in the main the charm to colour the situations in any greatly beguiling fashion.

In their effort to establish themselves in the great city, the girls' various encounters include Eileen's diffident soda-fountain beau (Robert Fosse), the smooth operator who tries to cut in on the romance (Tommy Rall), a comic rascal of a Greek landlord, and the handsome publisher of Ruth's stories about her sister Eileen. The publisher (Jack Lemmon) discovers Ruth's deception in trying to pass herself off as the heroine of the adventures she describes so feelingly, but convinces her of her attractions in her own right. There remain various broad characters who peer in at the basement, and, for the finale, a crowd of Brazilian sailors in an ambitious scene which fails to come off either as a well-staged number or as a comic climax.

Nevertheless, there are some excellently staged numbers. Firstly, there is a dance by Eileen's two rival beaux, built-up amusingly of neat dance feats as each tries to outdo the other. That fascinating miracle occurs when players, who have until then seemed only adequate as actors, assume authority as their true talent as dancers comes into play. The film's best number is also wonderfully wittily choreographed by Robert Fosse. Enchantingly danced by the four principals on a park bandstand, it is conceived with rich invention to a Dixieland score and infectiously sung by Betty Garrett in a "Mammy" style.

On the whole one feels, though, that Richard Quine's



"The Kentuckian": Burt Lancaster and Walter Matthau



direction was more stimulated by his racy and spirited sailors of *So This is Paris* than by the love problems of his provincial sisters. Janet Leigh makes an unaffected Eileen, but Jack Lemmon can find little to do with his improbable role of confidence restorer to a loveless lady writer.

DEREK PROUSE.

## IN BRIEF

**RIFI** (*Miracle*). The story of this film is divided into two distinct, almost separately constructed parts: first, the planning and execution of a robbery by four men, two Frenchmen and two Italians; second, their fight to the death with a rival gang which is after the loot. The first section is consistently exciting and stylish in its account of the coming together of the accomplices, of their respective characters and backgrounds. It is all presented within the French tradition of humanising criminality. We are invited to sympathise with and be amused by these men, and we gladly accept, endeared by the tired stoicism of the leader (Jean Servais) who is just out of prison, and by the puppyish high spirits of one of the Italians (Robert Manuel) who lives a sexual idyll, between jobs, with his jolly, pneumatic mistress. In these scenes, Jules Dassin's direction and the acting as a whole are authoritative and exact. The core of *Rifi* is the speechless half-hour sequence in which the men dig their way into the Paris branch of Mappin and Webb from the apartment above, dismantle the fiendishly sensitive burglar alarm and cut a neat circle in the back of the safe. This passage is a remarkable piece of technical ingenuity as regards both conception and presentation, and free of that self-conscious knowingness about criminal procedure that marred similar scenes in *The Asphalt Jungle*.

What follows, however, is corpse-ridden and silly. Crime having paid off, the criminals themselves have to pay. Murmuring "You know the rule," the leader kills one of his accomplices after the latter has betrayed his friends to the rival gang. . . . The writing, direction and camerawork become cheap and rhetorical, and one comes to the conclusion that Dassin is a director who, for all his technical skill, lacks feeling and discrimination. A pity that the film degenerates through attempting too much; for in the first half, when Dassin is working within his limitations, he creates an admirably incisive and entertaining piece of melodrama.—JOHN WILCOX.

**THE KENTUCKIAN** (*United Artists*), though its plot is almost tenuous and its action slight, is a long and ambitious kind of Western. Its anecdote of Eli Wakefield (Burt Lancaster) and his young son, making their way to the promised land of Texas and obliged to stop awhile at the township of Humility, in order to earn more money to continue their journey by steamboat, contains most of the implications of earlier Hecht-Lancaster productions. Eli's first action is to use all his savings on freeing a bond slave; at Humility, under the influence of his brother, a successful tobacco merchant, he is nearly tempted to give up the idea of Texas and settle down to marry the local schoolmistress and become a businessman. The contrast of the jealous, self-seeking world of the town and the simple freedom of life under the open sky is made explicit—inevitably, urged on by his son, Eli will reject Humility and the schoolteacher for Texas and the bond slave.

Unfortunately, A. B. Guthrie, the writer, and Burt Lancaster, star and director, have produced from all this something much too tentative. A leisurely exposition is made to seem unnecessarily slow by the demands of the CinemaScope frame (the subject calls for an intimacy that could have been much better achieved in ordinary black-and-white); the father-son relationship never crystallises; there is an attempt to explore the manners and customs of the period, but it results only in a few pleasant, inconclusive glimpses; the whole episode with the schoolmistress is weakly contrived, and to provide action at the climax a sub-plot about feuding families is introduced—here the villains are crudely handled, to the point of caricature. Also, a personal violence explodes suddenly in one scene, the whip duel, which is the most dynamically handled in the whole film, but has a gratuitous brutality. Throughout



Gang warfare in "Rifi": kidnapper, child victim and rival gang leader (Jean Servais).

*The Kentuckian*, in fact, one feels that Lancaster is fumbling for a personal statement. Because of this, and in spite of its failure to penetrate and control its subject, it remains a not unsympathetic film.—JAMES MORGAN.

**MADAME BUTTERFLY** (*Films de France*). This Italo-Japanese production is a much less naïve attempt at filming opera than most of its predecessors—less naïvely determined to release the opera from the stage by sending its characters senselessly flinging off over hill and dale; less naïvely apologising for its presumption with explanatory recitatives, narrations and additional business. The principal experiment in *Madame Butterfly* is the use of Japanese actors with the dubbed voices of Italian singers. The cinema is much more conscious than the opera house of the traditional physical insufficiencies of singers; and it would be foolish to complain of a piece of trickery which can give Cho-Cho-San an accomplished and beautiful visual interpreter like Kaoru Yachigusa, or make Goro such a smooth, pretty, expressive mime as Kiyoshi Takagi.

The opera itself has been changed little. An acted and narrated prologue—setting the scene and proposing the situation—is quite superfluous. The only notable excision flatters the odious Pinkerton by suppressing the declaration of his intention of deserting Cho-Cho-San. The main loss to the opera is its intervals. Even if act divisions are not a divine rule of dramatic form, Puccini was craftsman enough to construct his opera round these spiritual chasms; and without them the overall shape is lost. An intermezzo with half-a-million cherry-blossoms cannot fill—or rather, make—the gap.

These are the only serious flaws. Carmine Gallone's direction is retiring and urbane; the quality of the sound recording is consistently high; and the cool, chaste interiors (beautifully photographed by Claude Renoir) are among the most handsome film settings yet seen.—ERNEST CHIMNEY.





"The Woman in the Window." Joan Bennett, Edward G. Robinson.

# FRITZ LANG'S AMERICA

by Gavin Lambert

PART TWO

SINCE *You and Me*, which was a box-office failure and left him inactive for nearly two years, Lang has been more prolific but, with a few exceptions, less personal in his work. He has never attempted anything as ambitious, as broadly conceived, as his films of the '30s, and even the most interesting of his later ones remain minor in comparison. All the same, the output as a whole is far from negligible; and a work as recent as *The Big Heat* (1953) has shown that his talent, if seriously engaged, has not been exhausted by the whole Hollywood experience.

It was through Kenneth MacGowan (who had just produced *Young Mr. Lincoln*) that Lang was signed eventually by Fox to make a Technicolor western, *The Return of Frank James*. He had spent the intervening period writing the scenario, never to be accepted, for a melodrama with anti-Nazi undertones, and also in research into the history of the American West with the idea of making a film about a lost mine there. The melodrama, *Men Without a Country*, was to have revived in less wholly fantastic terms the theme of *The Spy*, and described the efforts of secret agents from various countries to obtain the formula for a new invention, a ray which blinds. (An apocalyptic last scene showed the inventor, confronted



with the ruthless master-spy, blinding himself and his antagonist with the ray to protect mankind from the consequences of its capture.) After this, and the epic possibilities of his Western story, which was to have covered nearly a hundred years in time, *The Return of Frank James* (1940) may have seemed insignificant; but it was a commercial success and earned Lang the assignment of *Western Union*, a pioneering adventure story about the establishment of a telegraph route through Indian territory.

Both these films have conventional scripts and, with the exception of Henry Fonda in *Frank James* (1940), rather indifferent playing. They lack dramatic tension, they are diffusely narrated, and in spite of the admirable period reconstruction of Richard Day's sets, they fail to create a living atmosphere. The clear air and the sweeping landscapes of the West seemed to stimulate Lang only as a painter, for it is in their markedly tasteful and exploratory use of Technicolor that the main interest of both films lies. The landscapes are soft and luminous, they have a rich, idyllic glow; and there are some night scenes—the scout's ride through the forest to parley with the Indian agents, and the emergency operation, with the doctor's enormous shadow across one wall of the tent, in *Western Union*, and the hold-up of the train in *Frank James*—that have seldom been equalled for their delicate, subtle shading. Yet one doesn't feel that colour holds much dramatic meaning for Lang; it seems mainly a decorative adjunct. (Several years later his third Western, *Rancho Notorious*, with its more artificial style, confirmed this impression.) The feeling in these films is remote and external, and though they contain some traditional prairie comedy with experienced players (Slim Summerville, Donald Meek), there is something academic, laborious, about it. From this point of view, a comparison of the trial scenes in *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Frank James* tells all.

Lang was, however, commercially re-established; and he was now able to make an anti-Nazi subject—not one, as it turned out, but three in succession. *Man Hunt* (1941), *Hangmen Also Die* (1942) and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) represent a curious sideline in his work. The first and third, set mainly in London, are really stories that Hitchcock should have made, depending for effect on ingenuity in plotting physical tension and excitement, in developing their intrigues and chases against naturalistic backgrounds. But this is not Lang's method. For thrillers, the films are wrongly paced—too applied, too expository—and their (mainly nocturnal) London backgrounds are as weirdly synthetic as Pabst's in *Dreigroschenoper* or even the "Limehouse Blues" sequence of *Ziegfeld Follies*. Overlaid with suggestions of vague terror and menace in everything—a tree or a clock, even, seems macabre, a phenomenon or object of intrinsic ill-will—these films dissipate their real source of tension, the game of hunter and hunted.

Only *Hangmen Also Die*, written in collaboration with Berthold Brecht during his exile in America, with a story based on newspaper reports of the assassination of Heydrich by a Czech underground group, has real authority and power. Its plot is not always plausibly contrived, and it suffers from disunity in casting (the Czech resistance is incarnated by Walter Brennan, Brian Donlevy, Dennis O'Keefe and, most unfortunately of all, Anna Lee); but its characterisation of the Nazis is highly original—these frightening but ironically observed members of a terror-group remind one of Lang's German melodramas. The dying Heydrich (Hans von Twardovsky) on the operating

table provides a chilling, eerie moment; the bustling, ingratiating Gestapo official (Reinhold Schunzel) is drawn with icily sardonic contempt; and, best of all, the plump bowler-hatted chief (Alexander Granach), living in a kind of sombre luxury, making ferocious love to his unattractive secretary and, sometimes, to a huge, ageing whore, grossly addicted to food and dirty jokes, is definitely worthy of admission to one of the monster-organisations of the '20s. In these Gestapo scenes, and in its portrait of the big-business collaborationist (Gene Lockhart), *Hangmen Also Die* seems more penetrating now than any other American film about Europe under the Nazis. Once again, though, it is interesting to note the dramatic force with which criminals are characterised, the lack of real individual power in the "other side."

## II

In 1944 Lang rejoined an old colleague, Walter Wanger (who produced *You Only Live Once*) to form Diana Productions, a company consisting of himself, Wanger, and Joan Bennett. The three films he made for Wanger, *Woman in the Window* (1944), *Scarlet Street* (1945) and *The Secret Beyond the Door* (1947), were made under conditions of relative independence and form a kind of trilogy. The first two have strong qualities, and possess what Lang's intermediate work lacked—a consistent, self-created world; and yet, apart from the fact that their scope is deliberately limited, there is something a little arid in their brilliance. Purposeful, imaginative, scrupulously executed, they voluntarily withdraw from the contemporary world.

All three revive some earlier themes: *Woman in the Window* and *Scarlet Street* the *femme fatale* and her trapped, insignificant victim, *The Secret Beyond the Door* the extravagant, tormented psychopath. The first two bear unmistakable imprints of the harsh schematic method and preoccupation with fatality in their opening scenes, but *Woman in the Window* is as a whole the most satisfactory. It has a strong melodramatic situation, compactly developed in Nunnally Johnson's script; the opening, non-committal and perfunctory—Edward G. Robinson as a university professor lecturing on criminal psychology, who leaves his class to say goodbye to wife and children, off for a holiday, at Grand Central Station—briefly establishes a departure (as in *Fury*), and there is a lightly stressed over-anxious note in the wife's farewell. Events, as might be expected, justify it. Lang prepares his timid middle-aged academic for calamity with systematic concentration; we see him next in a respectable New York club with two friends, a district attorney and a doctor, discussing the sexual possibilities of his temporary bachelorhood with heavy, furtive facetiousness. (Later on they will discuss murder with exactly the same joviality.) Left alone, the professor reads "The Song of Songs" for a bit, then goes out into the street. Pausing in front of the portrait

Fritz Lang's London. "Man Hunt."







Downtown bar: "Scarlet Street." Joan Bennett, Edward G. Robinson.

of a beautiful woman in an art gallery window, he sees her reflected in the glass, standing quietly behind him. The woman (Joan Bennett) is enigmatic but friendly—soon he has returned with her to her apartment. A few minutes later the fatality has occurred; when her wealthy, jealous lover arrives unexpectedly and attacks him, the professor kills him in self-defence.

Up to this point, the adventure has been described with an assiduous deliberation that gives it an almost dreamlike quality. Everything *seems* real—yet, surely, it cannot be. But the sleeper is not to wake, and nightmarish sequels—a nocturnal exercise to dispose of the body, a return with his friend the attorney to the scene of the crime, the constant fear of self-incrimination—arrive with the same inexorable, ominously charged momentum. It is only with the entrance of the blackmailer (Dan Duryea) that this momentum begins to slacken; the sense of accumulating fatality is not matched by a gathering intensity of rhythm, the inevitable begins to hover on the edge of the obvious. Yet perhaps this was Lang's intention; for, knowing the trap is bound to close, one is still fascinated to learn exactly how, and when. The detail and the visual texture are still continuously absorbing and expressive, for the film has an elaborate lighting pattern. The New York backgrounds are not specific but evocative, aspects of a big American city mainly at night—an empty street glittering with rain, pools of light reflections in the gutters, solid anonymous blocks of apartment houses. Only inside the woman's rather ostentatiously "modern" apartment is the lighting harsh and bright. There are a great many mirrors—hardly a shot without a character reflected in one of them—and a bleak, imprisoning effect is created. The professor's apartment is dingy and shadowed, and this contrast is at its most effective during a cross-cut telephone conversation between the two of them, with the woman lying back in bed and the professor's anxious face half in darkness. And there are some fine atmospheric effects—the thunderstorm that erupts as the professor comes through the dark hallway with the body over his shoulder; as he gets into his car to drive away (the camera is behind glass doors) the image is blurred by streaming rain. The car is held up at a toll bridge, and as the professor fumbles for a coin, we cut to a close-up of the corpse in the back, expressionless, staring, light catching the whites of his eyes. Later, when the professor and the woman meet in secret, the camera follows them on their walk through the emptying park in a single lateral tracking shot, through railings, the bars in the foreground

and the slow even movement again communicating isolation and imprisonment.

But the ending, which reveals the whole adventure to have been indeed a dream, is surely indefensible. Lang himself has tried to justify it: "If I had continued the story to its logical conclusion, a man would have been caught and executed for committing a murder because he was one moment off guard . . . I rejected this logical ending because it seemed to me a defeatist ending, a tragedy for nothing brought about by an implacable Fate—a negative ending to a problem which is not universal, a futile dreariness which an audience would reject." This seems, really, a confession that the story itself, if real, is pointless; in which case, why make it at all? From another point of view, turning "reality" at its harshest moment into a dream is itself defeatist and negative. The film's "logical ending" is, in fact, the moment when the desperate professor takes the poison, unaware that his blackmailer has just been killed in a gunfight with the police and that he has nothing more to fear. (In *Scarlet Street*, incidentally, a man is executed for a murder he didn't commit, and the final glimpse of the film's protagonist points unflinchingly to a "tragedy for nothing.") Lang has said that his choice of the dream ending was "conscious," just as the conclusion of *Scarlet Street*—which may not, he remarks, "*seem to fall in easily with my thesis*"—was designed to show that disregard of moral principles and "*evil in its many forms—the evil of crime, of weakness, of deceit—must reap some sort of physical or mental punishment.*" It is a matter of some doubt as to whether this consoling law is generally the rule or the exception in life; but, this apart, it is interesting that the "evil" of weakness in Eddie Taylor in *You Only Live Once*, which has involved him in murder and robbery, is pardoned. The audience is asked to sympathise with him—though not with the lazy, sluttish girl of *Scarlet Street* who ends up with a knife in her back. Yet, objectively, is her "crime" so much worse than Eddie Taylor's?

One doesn't feel, anyway, that either *Woman in the Window* or *Scarlet Street* are really concerned to point moral judgments. The personal motivations in *Scarlet Street* are more complex, but there are no gestures of sympathy for the little middle-aged cashier, hopelessly entangled with his desire for "Lazy-Legs" and his innate cravings for respectability. To La Fouchardière's play, originally filmed by Renoir in 1932 as *La Chienne*, Lang and Dudley Nichols, who wrote the screenplay, added a number of cold-blooded twists. In his spare time, Christopher Cross is an amateur painter, too shy ever to show his pictures, but "Lazy-Legs" and her boy-friend discover they have value and exhibit them with great success under her name. At the height of his infatuation, Cross happily accepts this. Less plausibly, the former husband of Cross's shrewish wife turns out not to have been drowned, as everyone presumed—Cross finds himself free and imagines that nothing now stands in the way of marriage with "Lazy-Legs." Where Renoir concentrated closely on the relationship of the middle-aged man and the grasping slut, making an intimate psychological study the centre of his film, Lang abstracts the situation; fate is constantly turning the screw, further enmeshing its victim in a series of arbitrary tricks and coincidences.\* Thus Cross accepts the most insolent exploitation under the belief that "Lazy-Legs" really loves him, and it is her contemptuous mockery of his excited proposal that drives him, suddenly

\* In her *Notes sur le Style de Fritz Lang* ("Revue du Cinéma"), Lotte Eisner says that Lang borrowed the Cinéma-thèque Française's copy of *La Chienne* before making *Scarlet Street*, in order to be sure his approach to the subject was different from Renoir's.



and ferociously, to kill her. Her boy-friend, discovering the body, coolly ransacks the apartment and makes off with everything of value. Inevitably this counts against him, and a major crime which this petty minor criminal didn't commit costs him his life. We leave Cross, several years later, as a derelict tramp hallucinated with guilt, shuffling round New York on a snowy Christmas Eve, the laughter of "Lazy-Legs" and her confession of love for her Johnny still ringing in his ears. (This was one of the rare occasions that the Hays Office permitted a screen murderer to go unconvicted, and the film was banned by various censorship boards in the States.)

*Scarlet Street* is Lang's most "European" American film. Its world has some superficial American characteristics, but its climate is distinctly that of Germany between the two wars. The action is set back in the early '30s, though the costumes are anachronistic; its surface is very similar to that of *Woman in the Window*, with the same cameraman (Milton Krasner) creating some dark-textured impressions of an anonymous, melancholy urban world. A long-held, static opening shot introduces "Scarlet Street" itself—nocturnal, rainy, vaguely raffish, with a barrel-organ playing while a few couples stroll past. There is the same lighting contrast between Cross's drab, cluttered apartment, where he lives with his appalling wife, and the airy studio in which he sets up "Lazy-Legs." At times, reminders of *The Blue Angel* become overt; where the professor's interest in the *Woman in the Window*—herself an abstracted, rootless figure about whom we learn

nothing throughout the film—was furtive and unstated, the cashier's obsession with "Lazy-Legs" is disclosed in a manner as dispassionate as von Sternberg's. One remembers Zola's preface to *Thérèse Raquin*: "I wanted to make a study of temperaments, not characters. . . . I chose people completely dominated by their nerves and their blood, without any free choice, dragged into each act of their lives by the fatality of their flesh. . . . The soul is completely absent."

But where the characters in *The Blue Angel* were conceived on a commanding scale, Dietrich's *femme fatale* an "incarnation of sex," as Kracauer remarked, and Jannings's Professor Unrath—representing more than a middle-aged professor who has for years worked out his frustrations on his pupils before succumbing to a cabaret singer—a symbol of a whole section of the German middle class after World War I, as much cannot be said for Robinson's Christopher Cross and Joan Bennett's "Lazy-Legs." Like all the characters—or, rather, temperaments—in the film, they are extremely petty. The rancid menage of "Lazy-Legs" and her Johnny, and the parallel one of Cross and his ugly, spiteful wife, are observed with a ruthless, entertaining irony; but Lang fails to infuse a sexual tension into the subject. He establishes, theoretically, that it exists—but that is all. Unlike Zola, he watches his dreadful lovers from outside; unlike von Sternberg, he does not create an atmosphere that acutely reflects the climate of its country and period. *Scarlet Street* is, finally, only an exercise in low-life. Its texture is brilliant but no

"The Big Heat": the gangster turns on his girl friend, and scalds her face with boiling coffee.





more than decorative in its significance; and for this reason its essential thinness becomes increasingly apparent.

Oddly enough, *The Secret Beyond the Door* showed a decline as marked as *You and Me* after its predecessors. It was also a box-office failure, and resulted in a second period of inactivity for Lang. The subject—a girl (Joan Bennett) marries a wealthy schizophrenic (Michael Redgrave) who collects rooms in which murders have been committed, adding a series of expensive replicas to his uninviting mansion—is quite intractable; and, as in *You and Me*, the material is overloaded with stylistic effects, mainly portentous low-key camerawork and a great deal of interior monologue on the girl's part. She psycho-analyses her husband out of killing her, incidentally, just in the nick of time.

### III

One doesn't know whether, in the last eight years, Lang has found difficulty in obtaining congenial subjects, or whether the conventionality of much of his output has reflected an inner lassitude. The films have ranged from workmanlike commerce (*I Shall Return*, *The Blue Gardenia*), to another exercise in the *Man Hunt*-*Ministry of Fear* style (*Cloak and Dagger*), to rather sterile artiness (*House by the River*, *Rancho Notorious*). They show an almost complete indifference to contemporary reality, and their characterisation is mainly thin and perfunctory. Occasionally, as in *Cloak and Dagger*, a spy thriller with extremely unorthodox European settings, there are moments of characteristic bravura; but they exist in a vacuum, which the fact that the hunted formula this time is an 'atomic one does nothing to break.

The most revealing film of this period, *Clash by Night* (1952), for which Lang found an old colleague, Norman Krasna, as producer, suggests an acquaintance with American life that stopped about 1937. It is in fact an adaptation (by Alfred Hayes) of an early play by Clifford Odets, and no effort is made to freshen its idiom or outlook. A bad sister (Barbara Stanwyck) returns to her native fishing village after ten inconclusive years in the big city; she marries a burly simple-minded fisherman (Paul Douglas) for security, but goes to the flash, discontented local projectionist (Robert Ryan) for excitement. Some tarnished dialogue strikes a wry, rueful note that seems almost self-parody now. ("Home is where you come to," pronounces Mae, weary of it all, "when you run out of places.") Into some of the marginal scenes, Lang infuses a more distinct flavour: the old illiterate father, constantly brooding over a dead baby someone has abandoned under a railway bridge, the shiftless uncle with his collection of pornographic pictures; and the husband's violent, inarticulate jealousy when he discovers Mae's infidelity is handled with harshly clinical force. There is, also, an odd and uncharacteristic attempt to "place" the drama on both a descriptive and symbolic level—a semi-documentary opening with gulls, seals, returning fishing boats, etc., and interludes of waves crashing against rocks, thunderclouds massing in the sky.\*

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\* Lang, who has never seemed at home with "authentic" locations, repeated the documentary-style setting in *Human Desire* (1954), a somewhat dispirited transposition (by Alfred Hayes) of Zola's *La Bête Humaine*, originally filmed by Renoir. The emphasis in this version is placed more directly on the woman, a minor *femme fatale*, sluttish and petulant, with a brutal husband whom she nearly persuades her lover to murder. Apart from the players (Gloria Grahame and Glenn Ford) seeming ill at ease, and the absence of sexual tension from their scenes, the backgrounds are strangely commonplace and impersonally observed, suggesting again how "atmosphere" for Lang, as for most German directors, is essentially linked to the studio.

A film like this seems to mirror, if not a retreat, a self-imposed distance from contemporary reality; and, remembering the formal, enclosed worlds of *Woman in the Window* and *Scarlet Street*, one guesses that the general movement of the American cinema since the end of the war towards naturalism has not been congenial to Lang. With *The Big Heat* (1953), however, he found a subject—a small town dominated by a racketeer, and a young detective's determination to break his tyranny—in which he could combine American "realism" and the more abstract, symbolic menace of his most characteristic melodrama. The result is a minor but frequently brilliant film that stands comparison with his best work.

The background, in its broad elements, is Chandler-town; but the temperament is a distinctive one. From the opening shot, the close-up of the revolver—with which the corrupt police chief is to shoot himself—lying on the table, there is a morose intentness on violence. The killings and outrages, of which there are an unusually large number, are not presented with gross physical emphasis or detail—several of them occur offscreen—but they determine, menacingly, the course of action. Lagana (Alexander Scourby) the racketeer, who has police and civil officials as well as thugs in his pay, is characterised in a disturbing but remote manner, reminiscent of Lang's earlier great master-criminals. He lives in a large, soberly furnished house, guarded by strong-arm men and liveried servants, a portrait of his aristocratic-looking mother hangs over the study fireplace; once, through another door, a party given by his daughter is glimpsed in progress, jazz blaring out and teenager couples gaily jiving; and there is a remarkable image of Lagana standing on his terrace at night, talking of the need for care in rigging elections, advising a minion not to act rashly and arouse people's suspicions—while, behind his elegant smiling figure is a huge office block, squares of light in the windows, forming an abstract backdrop to the scene. We never see Lagana enjoying the fruits of his power, and when he boasts of it, it is for itself, not for what it brings. He hates to have his façade of respectability challenged, and most of all he takes pride in the fact that he gave his mother a fine house to live in before she died. This, incidentally, is no sentimental boast, but a statement of cold satisfaction that the myth of an "exclusive" family has been completed. Like his predecessors, Lagana is a dedicated, joyless and solitary power-maniac.

In its greater variety of human comment, and its more intimate observation of character, *The Big Heat* marks a development in Lang's work. The policeman's cold-blooded, grasping widow, his anxious, fading mistress, the cruel sensual Vince (Lagana's righthand man) and his frivolous, childish girl-friend Debby—these are unusually rounded portraits, presented more acutely and vividly for themselves than is usual with Lang; and, at the centre, is the impressive, restrained figure of Bannion the detective (Glenn Ford) who persists, in the face of corrupt superiors, in his crusade against Lagana—even after one of his thugs has placed a bomb in his car and blown up his wife. This characterisation has a suggestion of moral force and human fervour that the enemies of Mabuse and Haighi never possessed. Bannion, like Eddie Taylor in *You Only Live Once*, is one of Lang's few personal heroes.

The texture of the film is richer and more concentrated than in any of his work since the '30s, and its tension slackens only in the last twenty minutes, due partly to some ambiguities (notably the unmotivated change of heart by Bannion's superior) in Sydney Boehm's otherwise excellently written script, and partly to Gloria Grahame's performance. Her Debby of the early scenes, immature, pleasure-loving, easily bored, easily delighted,



is beautifully drawn; but after the horrific incident in which Vince, believing she has been treacherous, throws a pot of boiling coffee in her face and scars it, the character doesn't rise to the necessary intensity. Fleeing to Bannion for protection, Debby can at first talk only of the fact that one side of her face will be permanently disfigured, that she will no longer be desirable—it seems the end of the world to her. Later, she comes to see a kindness, a decency in Bannion that she has never encountered before, and which makes her want to help him. This growth, these complexities, the actress does not achieve, and as a result there is something unconvincing about the last scenes.

As well as revolvers, Lang uses other objects in the atmospheric German manner, notably the rows of gleaming brandy glasses that always introduce the scenes at the tawdry smart bar—a shadow of one even falls across a close-up of a clock on the wall. There is, too, a characteristically handled scene, very *Mabuse* in style, of the crippled old woman who helps Bannion identify his wife's murderer. She meets him on a wasteland plot adjoining a garage; the space is broken up by derelict cars and piles of scrap; she hobbles towards the wire fence by which Bannion is standing, and the camera shoots the whole scene through the wire-pattern of the fence. This is the only daylight location scene in the film, and its actuality is appropriately filtered; apart from a few nocturnal streets, *The Big Heat* is a resolutely interior film, distinguished from most contemporary American melodrama by its relatively formal approach to settings, its indifference to documentation. The world of shadows persists, and their force reminds one of Lotte Eisner's remark that the shadow, in Lang's films, is always an image of destiny.

#### IV

*The Big Heat* raises the whole problem of self-renewal for the creative artist. What one generally calls "development" in an artist's work stems from the twin advances of a broadening assimilation of human experience, and an enrichment of technique. The one stimulates the other, the business of creation becomes a constant search for new forms by which to express new experiences, new visions. When Lang first came to America, he found this stimulus, and contact with a new reality produced *Fury* and *You Only Live Once*. These films sprang from actual situations, but Lang treated them as manifestations of a more general one—as, again, the basic material of *The Big Heat* resembles that of a score of American thrillers, but a personal imagination transforms it and relates it to the artist's own created world. But, between *You Only Live Once* and *The Big Heat*, Lang's imaginative vision has seemed frequently under-nourished; neither *Woman in the Window* nor *Scarlet Street* enlarges the experiences communicated by his best work: they are, rather, skilful minor variations on it. What they lack is a true *raison d'être*. Neither the professor nor the cashier is organically related to the society in which he lives; but Lang is not the kind of director to make the interior dramas of personal life real in themselves—abstracted, poverty, sexual desire, loneliness, cease to become powerful motivating factors and are merely conditions of life coldly taken for granted in view of what is to come.

In Lang's best films, society is always composed of victims and aggressors. For his characters really to live, he needs to place or ensnare them on one side or the other. The same struggles, marked by violence of an ingenuity and refinement that reveals a uniquely sinister imagination, are fought over and over again. Nor are they, necessarily, ennobling, for the director's impassivity precludes a tragic feeling. The violence, as such, is untouched by pity or anger; it admits only an intellectual horror.

Fritz Lang instructs Keith Andes in the art of strangulation for a scene in "Clash by Night."

The world of Fritz Lang is remarkable for its absence of beauty. It is true that *The Spy* was described by Herman G. Weinberg as "one of the most beautiful melodramas ever made," but this is a somewhat specialised use of the term. And Fritz Lang's America is not essentially different from Fritz Lang's Germany (or Fritz Lang's London); it is less openly macabre, its crime and terror exist on a comparatively realistic level, but both countries are really another country, a haunted place in which the same dramas constantly recur. The shadow of outrage lies across *Fury*, *You Only Live Once*, *Scarlet Street*, *The Big Heat*, as it does across *Doctor Mabuse* and *M*, and the obsessed little New York cashier is trying, like the child-murderer of Dusseldorf, to escape "the man behind you."

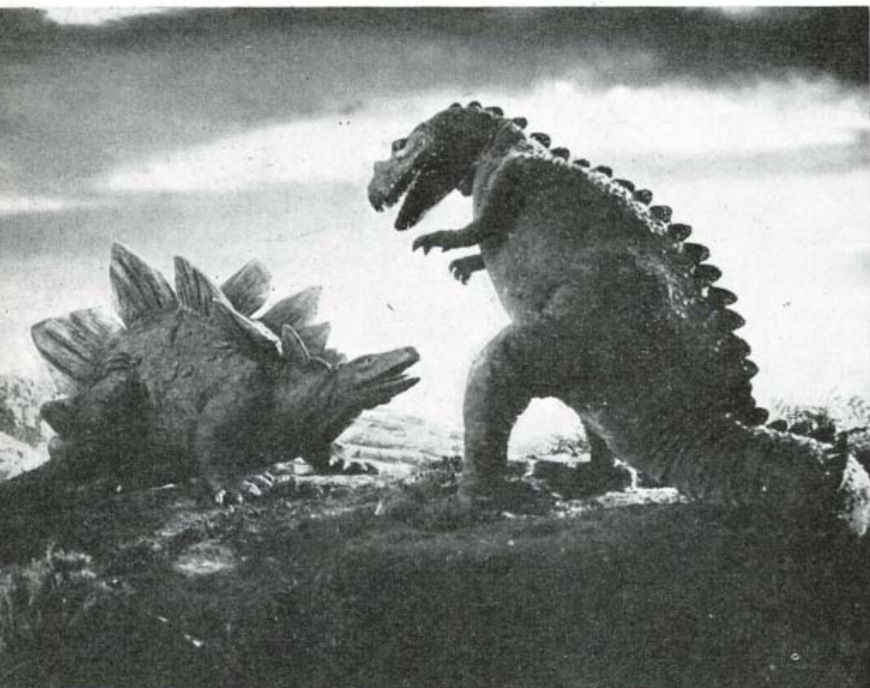
"In the découpage of all his films, from the first to the *Woman in the Window* and *Scarlet Street*," Lotte Eisner has written, "nothing can obstruct the fatal advance of destiny." A part of Lang's peculiar talent is that the surface world of his films—urban, nocturnal, the cities and machines that men have constructed, hardly ever the natural, the untouched world—is rich in symbols of evil prescience. (The similarity of the shot in *M*—the murderer in front of the shop window, reflected in a display of knives, and then the reflection of the child he is going to kill—with that of *Woman in the Window*—the professor in front of the art gallery window, his own reflection joined by that of the woman—has been noted before.) The destiny which advances, it need hardly be said, is not beautiful or pleasant; it is organised terror or the break-out of the "Caligari within."

It is this persistent imaginative projection of an anxiety neurosis that gives Lang's films their unique power; as works of art they are restricted by the fact that their ultimate gesture is too passive, too unmoved, but they discover, and convey, a new *frisson*. In the shadow of its premonition, human relations break down, guilt and violence are at large, and though for the first time in *The Big Heat* the ending shows a crusader still going about his business—Bannion is called out on a new job—one feels little doubt that he will soon be up against a situation equally ominous.





# North and South | THE FESTIVALS



Prehistoric monsters from the Czech children's film "Journey to a Primeval Age".

## EDINBURGH

It is not easy to sum up the general "feel" of a Festival in a word, but there seemed to be unanimous agreement among the scores of visiting film-makers, journalists, official delegates and general public that what Edinburgh needed this year was a *new* masterpiece. Several of the best films shown—including *L'Oro di Napoli*, Mizoguchi's two-year-old *Ugetsu Monogatari* and the Soviet *Romeo and Juliet*—had been seen at previous European Festivals, and there were few real surprises among the remaining features selected. Although many of the programmes were undeniably dull, the same could not be said of the visitors. It was possible to discuss many controversial topics with delegates from Britain, America, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R., India, China, Japan; and many film-makers were able to meet both Press and public in a manner not always possible elsewhere. For instance, Carl Dreyer spent several hours answering a barrage of questions (and still found time to visit Holyrood to undertake research for his film on Mary Stuart); Jacques Tati enlivened an official occasion with an impromptu mime, and Vittorio de Sica paid a warm, public tribute to the memory of Humphrey Jennings and Leslie Howard and prophesied a coming renaissance for neo-realism. One incident, however, disturbed the peace of mind of a number of visitors—this was the decision to show only five episodes from *L'Oro di Napoli* (including, fortunately, the beautiful funeral sequence) as the sixth story had arrived un-subtitled. This difficulty could, surely, have been overcome by a brief commentary, for the complete film was Press shown, and de Sica stated at his reception that he had conceived it as six contrasted variations on the Neapolitan character.

"Munna": Romi, the little orphan boy, practises snake- charming.

Apart from the beautiful Mizoguchi film, the Asian countries were particularly well represented, the other Japanese entries being *Children of Hiroshima* and a delightful short children's feature, *Trumpet Boy*. This story of a young teacher's efforts to develop his pupils' interest in music gives an interesting insight into certain aspects of Japanese life. *Munna*, made by K. A. Abbas, a leading exponent of the new Indian "realist" school, describes the adventures of a young orphan in search of his mother. Episodic and picaresque in style, the narrative preserves a nice balance between the farcical and the tragic and the scene in which the boy is confronted with his real mother is handled with genuine feeling. A shepherd boy, made old and wise by the war, is the hero of the Chinese *Letter With the Feathers*. Often naïve and crude, it nevertheless conjures up a vivid picture of the impact of war on a child's mind and the little boy himself, valiantly struggling to keep his flock of sheep together, is a remarkably real creation.

Pabst's *The Last Act*, although made in Austria, belongs to the series of war films now popular in Germany. Based on a story by Remarque describing the imagined last days of Hitler and his staff in the Berlin bunker, it is made with considerable drive and technical fluency. Unfortunately, Pabst's detached attitude, a tiresomely ranting performance by the actor playing Hitler, and some dubious "anti-Nazi" references make it a rather chilling experience. A characteristic macabre orgy in the bunker's canteen, followed by the businesslike disposal of Hitler's body, end the film on a grimly sardonic note.

The most fiercely discussed production of all was undoubtedly Carl Dreyer's *Ordet* (*The Word*) which bore the unmistakable stylistic stamp of its creator. An adaptation of a gloomy, guilt-ridden play by Kaj Munk, it concerns the conflict of religious beliefs between two families. The material itself is hardly promising, and Dreyer's painfully slow, over-theatrical direction makes it something of an endurance test. The final resurrection scene is visually very reminiscent of *Day of Wrath* but, unlike his previous work, Dreyer appears now to have lost confidence in the dramatic possibilities of the close-up. One is kept at a respectful distance for most of the film's considerable running time. Although the other Danish feature, *A Day Came*, borrows heavily from earlier European films dealing with underground movements, the director, Sven Methling, Jr., has managed to avoid the worst kind of false heroics, and the film stands as a genuinely felt tribute to a group of brave people.





A resistance movement of another kind was the subject of the Israeli film, *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*, directed by Thorold Dickinson. Told in personal rather than abstract political terms, it suffers from a confused script and some weak playing, though the best scenes (such as the Jewish exodus from the city) are realised with an emotional warmth rarely found in this director's work.

From Czechoslovakia came Karel Zeman's *Journey to a Primeval Age*, an ingenious children's adventure story in Agfacolor, in which four boy explorers find themselves in a strange world of prehistoric monsters, vividly represented by a large array of puppets and special effects. A lengthy colour biography of *Jan Hus* soon became bogged down in a morass of theological and ideological arguments which, for me, failed to sustain the interest despite some powerful acting and beautiful costume design by Jiri Trnka.

Cartoon and puppet films were represented in other programmes, and two features, one Czech and the other American, demonstrated varied styles in animal animation. *Stories About a Doggy and a Pussy*, directed by Eduard Hofman and adapted from several children's stories by Joseph Capek (the brother of Karel) captures much of the writer's simple charm and humour. In contrast, Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, with its blatant comic-strip animals and clotted sentimentality, appeared noisy and inflated. Much expert animation and some original creations (the Siamese cats, for instance) provided some compensation.

*The Blackboard Jungle* (directed by Richard Brooks) brought us sharply back to the discussion of social issues. A horrifying study of brutal juvenile delinquents in an American high school, its problem is delineated in some tautly handled classroom scenes, although glibness and compromise creep in towards the end.

Unfortunately, the superb dancing in the Soviet *Romeo and Juliet* was not seen to the greatest advantage for, together with a number of other films, it was projected on an entirely unsuitable wide screen (perhaps next year's screen shapes will be more static). A Russian children's film, *Two Friends*, made by V. Eissimont, a talented director unknown in this country, tended to over-stress its moral of working hard at school, but the spontaneous gaiety of its young players proved hard to resist.

The remaining features, which require little comment, included Duvivier's *Marianne de ma Jeunesse*, an arty piece of whimsy with a misty German setting; a tired remake in Gevacolor of *Herr Arne's Treasure* from Sweden; and *The Lark*, a lengthy survey of Rumanian folk dances. East Germany's contribution was an exhausting feature documentary of Beethoven's life, and West Germany sent *No More Fleeing*, an obscure and tedious *avant-garde* film by Herbert Veseley.

Edinburgh's most gruelling ordeal is invariably the annual programme of 16 mm. experimental films. Several tedious and occasionally revolting American and Swedish shorts were greeted with a few mild hisses and others (including a boring Maya Deren ballet film) were received in uneasy silence. There remained *The Towers*, a rather touching study of an old workman who builds strange structures from odd pieces of material, and *End of Summer*, a gentle evocation of the post-holiday mood slightly reminiscent of *Muscle Beach*.

The short films, as a whole, ranged from the competent to the tedious, and there was nothing to match the excitement of last year's *Time Out of War*. The Canadian selection was bright and efficient with McLaren's ingenious (if dazzling) *Blinkity Blank*, *To Serve the Mind*, another conscientious analysis of a mental breakdown, and *Gold*, a concise survey of Yukon mining. Films on the arts



"Letter with the Feathers"

included *The Colourful World of Otakar Nejedly*, an affectionate study of the Czech painter, and *The Flower and the Straw*, a selection of Cruickshank's drawings. Chinese acrobats gave an astonishing display in *The Emperor of Monkeys*, and *Pantomimes* commemorated the gentler art of Marcel Marceau. Other French shorts included *M. et Mme. Curie*, a pleasant, if minor, television film by Franju, and Yannick Bellon's *Warsaw Remains*, a moving study of destruction and reconstruction. *The Big Issue*, a stark exposé of living conditions in an American city, was honest and disturbing. Britain sent *The New Explorers*, an oil film shot in six different countries; *The Rival World*, Bert Haanstra's engrossing account of the war against insects; and *The Bespoke Overcoat*, a delicately acted Wolf Man-kowitz story. Bjarne Henning-Jensen's colour film of Greenland, *Where Mountains Float*, was sympathetic, well photographed and rather dull.

The customary public lectures were given this year by Carl Dreyer, who advocated a new approach to abstraction in the cinema, and Mary Field, who, at the British Film Academy's meeting, spoke on the difficulties of holding an audience's attention. Miss Field also, at a conference on Children's Films held during the final week, gave a skilful survey of the problems involved, and several C.F.F. productions were shown in the children's programmes arranged for the same period.

This spate of speech-making was continued at two lengthy awards ceremonies, at the first of which the Richard Winnington Award was presented to Mark Donskoi's Gorki Trilogy. *Ugetsu Monogatari* won the Selznick Golden Laurel Award and the Golden Laurel Trophy went to Vittorio de Sica, who was this year's President of the Film Festival.

Finally, what portents for the future can be drawn from this collection of 170 films from 30 countries? It would be foolish to deny that a good deal of this year's "Living Cinema" was palpably dead, and yet there were signs, here and there, suggesting that de Sica and Zavattini's concept of the necessity of "seeing" has not fallen on stony ground. Perhaps next year's harvest will show more fully how East and West have progressed in the search for truth and understanding.

JOHN GILLET.





"The Cicada": Olga (L. Zlikovskala) entertains the artists.

## VENICE

**Monday, August 29.**—First visit to the Palazzo del Cinema confirms business as usual. National stands on the ground floor and the encircling interior terrace above—Unitalia, Unifrance, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., etc. Also an uncharacteristically lavish British stand, with photographs of Dirk Bogarde and players from *Doctor at Sea*, Vivien Leigh, Belinda Lee, and so on. A brochure, "Stars for Venice," announces impending arrival of many of them.

Reunion with *festivaliers* of all nations, and soon the usual question: "What have I missed?" (The Festival has been in progress for five days.) Not a great deal, it appears; Dreyer's *Ordet* I have seen in London, the Bulgarian film *A Man Decides* and the Yugoslav *Moment of Decision* are solid, decent, but not exceptional, and *Catch a Thief* is only medium Hitchcock. A Russian adaptation of Tchekhov's *The Cicada* must not be missed, though.

5.0 p.m. programme: *Gli Sbandati* (*The Disbanded*), first feature film by 24-year-old Francesco Maselli, already known for some documentaries. An isolated country house in Italy during the war, ruled over by pro-German Contessa (Isa Miranda); her adolescent son Andrea (Jean-Pierre Mocky) and his friends, from similar families, lead an idle rootless existence—swimming, picnicking, chasing girls. The armistice comes, and a group of escaped Italian soldiers hide out nearby. Andrea's friends help them, bring them to the house in the Contessa's absence—this is their awakening of responsibility, their first contact with the war. . . . *Gli Sbandati* is a film of exceptional talent; a simple, sometimes under-dramatic style, but with a fine feeling for atmosphere and an incisive comment on its people and its problem. As so often in a first film, one can detect influences—Visconti, Zavattini—but here they are assimilated. I like the first part (up to the soldiers) better than the second, though the final scene is impressive; later, talking to Maselli, find he is dissatisfied with the first, pleased with the second. . . .

9.30 p.m. programme: Mizoguchi's *Yokichi*, a tale of tragic love between an 8th century Chinese emperor and a commoner. Some beautiful, subtle Eastmancolour, fine performances by Mayasuki Mori and Machiko Kyo, the air of distinction inseparable from this director—and yet it disappoints. The Chinese convention seems inhibiting—one feels the actors' unease with it, the director's almost excessive discretion. For once Mizoguchi fails to achieve a tragic impact. Later, Japanese delegate confirms that Mizoguchi had great difficulties over the film, particularly the Chinese aspect.

**Tuesday, August 30.** *The Cicada* is being shown again this morning. A minor Madame Bovary, married to a patient doctor, flirts with Petersburg's artists, and in particular a fashionable painter; he throws her over after a while, and she returns discontentedly to her Dymov. When he dies, after contracting a disease at work, she has a revelation of her own emptiness, the futility of her aspirations. . . . S. Samsonov, who adapted and directed the film, is 27 years old, a pupil of Guerassimov, a protégé of Youtkevich. Already an astonishingly developed and subtle talent. The Tchekhov balance, irony and tenderness, pathos and absurdity, is exactly caught; period

evocation irreproachable, with excellent Agfacolour—a finely cluttered bourgeois drawing-room, exquisite landscapes for the idyll, a beautiful Petersburg street scene; acting most memorable. Will this be a festival of new directors?

After the excitements of yesterday and this morning, respectively solid and distasteful fare in the Palazzo. Afternoon: a Polish mountain drama, *Men of the Blue Cross*, directed by Andrezs Munk (another feature début), set in the last days of World War 2. Soviet soldiers, wounded and trapped in a mountain hut, are brought to safety by mountain guides who successfully evade German patrols. Good camerawork, signal honesty of intentions, but a stiff, impersonal tone. In the evening an Argentine heavy: *La Tierra del Fuego se Apaga* (*T. de F. Calms Down*). Directed by Fernandez, photographed by Figueroa, this is pretentious and rather bestial stuff, with the usual South American ingredients; Figueroa has become the Wagner of the Camera. Everything, from a flock of sheep to the expressive, not inconsiderable bosom of the star, Anna-Maria Lynch, is arranged for "beautiful" composition.

**Wednesday, August 31.** French journalists continue malicious sallies against Claire Booth Luce, who insisted that *The Blackboard Jungle* be withdrawn, as it suggested that American schools are barbarous and ungovernable. (M.G.M. substitute *Interrupted Melody*, and one hopes the ambassadress, at least, is satisfied.) The latest insult—apart from suggestions to go home, etc.—is to call her "Aunt Sam" and, mysteriously, "Claire (Anastasia) Luce." Must find out what this means.

Further "scandal": the Czech *Jan Huss* has been withdrawn, as it may give offence to Catholic church. Substitute life of Smetana promised.

Gene Moskowitz, *Variety's* (and *Sight and Sound's*) Paris correspondent, has good anecdotes of Press conferences held during the first week by Dreyer and Machiko Kyo. Asked what place, in his opinion, *Vampyr* occupied in his work, Dreyer replied, "Number nine." Then he corrected himself. "Sorry—number ten." Later, he offered an illuminating definition of the film that is a work of art: "if you find you cannot touch any part of it without destroying it, then it is a work of art." Machiko Kyo, astonishingly graceful in her traditional Japanese costume (though she usually wears Western dress), pronounced herself frightened of Mizoguchi, eager to appear in musicals, and a staunch Judy Garland fan. She adored *A Star is Born*. "And Marlon Brando?" "Ah!" she said, on a very high note, and her eyes glittered.

The afternoon's Russian film, directed by Leonid Lukov, is called *Towards the New Bank*. Unpromising title, but in spite of too literal adherence to an old-fashioned novel stuffed with coincidences and all kinds of false alarms, it has some fine qualities. Something epic, exhilarating, in the feel of the whole thing: Lithuania from 1920 to 1950, two generations of a number of families and their reactions to political upheavals. The early sequences have a dynamic strength and some rich human observation. Later, plot artifices are a severe handicap, and the propagandist element becomes dull.

In the evening *Ciske the Rat*, a Dutch film directed by Wolfgang Staudte. Plain-faced misunderstood delinquent child struggles to free himself from vicious mother—exemplary textbook stuff, unimpeachable and well made, but no spark.

**Thursday, September 1,** opens with another scandal: tonight's Spanish film, *Il Canto dell Gallo*, has been withdrawn. It will apparently offend the communists. The Spanish delegation takes umbrage, withdraws its other film and itself from the festival.

Uneventful day (euphemism for visit to the beach), rounded off by *Maos Sangrentas* (*Bloody Hands*), brutish Brazilian melodrama about escaping convicts.

**Friday, September 2.** Both films are by young directors. First a French one, Alexandre Astruc's *Les Mauvaises Rencontres*. An ambitious young girl sets out to "conquer" Paris, and through a series of lovers moves into the *haut monde* of journalism, fashion, and the Left Bank. Astruc knows the cinema well—too well. Effects from Murnau, Welles, Antonioni (he's nothing if not eclectic) stand out clearly. But where is his own style? Rubbishy story and dialogue with a lot of *chic* "cinematic" dressing.

In the evening, Franco Rosi's *Amici per le Pelle* (*Friends for Life*), most attractive and freshly observed Italian film about the relationship of two young boys, and the moment of jealousy that sadly wrecks their affection for each other.



In the somewhat overworked genre of films about and with children, this one stands apart for its delicacy and understanding, and the marvellous performances.

*Saturday, September 3.* The films (*John and Julie* and *The Kentuckian*) are overshadowed by one of those extraordinary social events of which only a film festival is capable. United Artists give an open-air midnight party to celebrate *The Kentuckian*. Site, the old abandoned casino—rather derelict courtyard brightened with fountains and coloured lights, banners, and, for some reason, three horses. Above, two open terraces and a murder-your-way-there bar. About 800 people present, including table of British stars, successfully arrived and much photographed. Affirmations of international goodwill over the microphone; it is announced that “Miss Betty” will sing *The Kentuckian* theme song, then that Gloria Swanson will lead a square dance. She doesn’t, but after demonstration by Italians, Rossano Brazzi and Eunice Gayson step in nobly. A starlet is photographed with the horses, but she is nervous and won’t pat them; one whinny, and she’s off. But a Russian actress calmly mounts, to applause and flash bulbs. It is all rather like the party in *L’Age d’Or*.

*Sunday, September 4.* Kautner’s *Der Teufels General*, well-made though heavily theatrical film of rather unilluminating play about a German air ace who becomes opposed to the Nazis during the war. Strongest asset is performance by Curd Joergens.

*Monday, September 5.* *Les Héros sont Fatigués*, by Yves Ciampi. Slick, unattractive thick-ear stuff with pretensions, and a milieu imitated from *Salaire de la Peur* and *Les Orgueilleux*. Curd Joergens turns up in it, and is excellent.

*Tuesday, September 6—Thursday, September 8.* The season’s popular virus, angina, has struck, and I lie in bed, occasionally punctured by the nurse’s needle, and feel annoyed to miss Antonioni’s *Le Amiche*, rather pleased to miss *Interrupted Melody* and *Chiens Perdus sans Collier* (Delannoy on juvenile delinquents), not as sad as I should be about the Russian *Boris Godounov*.

*Friday, September 9.* Out again, to discover that I can see *Le Amiche* at another showing. This is a sardonic social comedy, from Cesare Pavese’s novel *Among Women Only*, of

aimless lives and sexual promiscuity among the Turin smart set; some brilliantly effective scenes, subtle camera style, and good acting by Valentina Cortese, Gabriele Ferzetti, Rossi-Drago, Yvonne Furneaux. Italy seems to maintain an enviable range of talent and variety among its younger directors. Who will be enterprising enough to bring their films to England? The evening’s film is Italian again, but this time a heavy disappointment: Fellini’s *Il Bidone*, with Broderick Crawford, not on form, as the lonely, ageing head of a gang of swindlers. It lasts two hours ten minutes, and doesn’t seem to be about anything at all.

*Saturday, September 10.* Last day, with endless rumours flying about the prizes, and news that a French critic was crying through most of *Interrupted Melody*. Discussion of this adjourned for *The Big Knife*, very hysterical version of Odets’ somewhat hysterical play, coarsely directed by Robert Aldrich. Receive rumour that it will win a prize with indignation (though not, after experience of previous years, incredulity.) Prizes are always compromise between merit and international share-out basis, and the Americans (with as poor a selection as the British this year) won’t go home without something.

So comes midnight, and Dr. Ottavio Croze, whose direction has made the Venice festival so admirably informal, faces lights and cameras to read the jury’s decision. The Golden Lion goes to Dreyer for his artistic achievements as a whole as well as *Ordet*—well, all right; *Ordet* isn’t one of his best films, but it stands for something. Silver Lions to *The Cicada*, *The Big Knife* (ah-hah!), *Le Amiche*—and *Ciske the Rat*. Am astonished that anyone should prize that over *Amici per le Pelle*. Male acting prize shared between Kenneth More for *The Deep Blue Sea* and Joergens for both his performances. No female acting prize awarded. Also, special medals for a group of young directors, to Maselli for *Gli Sbandati*, Astruc for *Les Mauvaises Rencontres*, Václav Krška for *Smetana*, William Fairchild for *John and Julie*, Munk for *Men of the Blue Cross*. A nice gesture, especially for Maselli, the outstanding talent among these. Everyone moves off to the farewell banquet, and so, for another year, the lights go out in the Palazzo.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

“*Gli Sbandati*”: Jean-Pierre Mocky and Lucia Bose.





ALBERT JOHNSON

## THE TENTH MUSE IN SAN FRANCISCO (3)



"The Search." Ivan Jandl.

*The San Francisco Museum of Art has been sponsoring a series of film shows with introductory lectures, in which a director's work is presented by himself or by another Hollywood personality.*

THE series has "caught on"—tonight a complete sell-out, for Fred Zinnemann's appearance. The success of *From Here to Eternity*, no doubt, has given the evening an additional touch of excitement. Frank Stauffacher has just told me the director only reached San Francisco a few minutes ago, and is having dinner. . . . The film is to be shown first, with a question and answer period afterwards.

*Impressions during the film.* I realise now that I have seen *The Search* at least five times—it is a 16mm. favourite in summer camps and resorts. The opening scenes, with the displaced children herded together, offer perceptive, sombre glances into the doleful aftermath of World War 2. The children's faces are numbed and resigned, and Karel Malik (Ivan Jandl) has large, solemn

eyes. The narration here, spoken by a sensible-sounding feminine voice, the soothing voice of a housewife, I find very unnecessary and distracting. The children's faces are far more eloquent than words. ("This was once a barracks—a German barracks. It has other uses now; no sounds of children's voices and laughter," etc.) I wonder if this narration was decided upon by the director. . . . But the faces are haunting. Their reality of reflected suffering seen-too-soon is something that could not be artificially simulated.

The documentary style is quickly eliminated as the story gets under way. The flashback to the Malik family is rather theatrical—must *all* Nazi-persecuted families be miniatures of the Budapest String Quartet? Here, of an evening, the Maliks get together to play a *weltschmerz* sonata, and Mrs. Malik (Jarmila Novotna) is able to display her fine vocal capabilities. The narrator, now a man, informs us that the fateful knock at the door arrives because they were "Czech intellectuals"—this is vague indeed, and it would be better to know definitely why all of the Maliks were arrested.



The famous scene of the children watching the arrival of Red Cross trucks, their suspicion about the symbol of the cross itself, the impact of fear as they are packed into the back of the trucks—all this retains its power. The shots of ruined Berlin are magnificent, the rubble and charred remnants of buildings, all the appearance of destruction which Americans look upon with such a deep sense of foreboding, and accept as an existing symbol of the past conflict. One of the trucks stalls and backfires, bringing the convoy to a halt, and the children become panicky when one of them sniffs the exhaust fumes and screams "Gas!" They all break out of the truck, shrieking in terror, race off in all directions. (Is the incident inspired by the Czech film, *Ghetto Terezin*, in which a group of refugees are frightened into believing they are going to be gassed, when in fact they are going to be given showers?)

The chase through the ruins is excellently done, though it would be better without the music. It seems right that a child's images should be haunted by all this dereliction. Karel limps through the city rubble (he has an odd way of making his foot seem deformed) and is seen by an American soldier (Montgomery Clift), who sits in a jeep complacently eating a cheese sandwich. I get the feeling of the director here—could it be a keen awareness on his part of "symbolic visualization," a high-sounding phrase, but the feeling for that moment in which two human beings, each suddenly representative of some truth, or "state of life as a whole," or even of an *era*, come face to face and attempt to find or rediscover a meeting-place for their souls? Some new spiritual alignment from which both will emerge as either better or different personalities? The memorable shot of Karel cautiously approaching the piece of sandwich and tearing at it like an animal. . . .

The soldier watches; and Clift, in his first screen role, still makes a strong impression. The mannerisms—hesitant breath-broken speech, sudden toothy smile, nervous scratchings and slumpings—look newest and freshest in this film. And I am won over, like most, by his extreme likeability. Karel struggles wildly with Steve when the soldier seizes him and transports him to his quarters, and his animal-like resistance subsides momentarily upon the entrance of Steve's comrade, played by Wendell Corey. The soldiers' dialogue is jocular and apt ("I was sitting minding my own business and this joker comes and eats my lunch"), and it quickly emerges that these two G.I.s are not in any way as *eiskalt* as the Coca Colas they drink. They are indeed rare human blends of military personality—a far cry from Zinnemann's soldiery of Pearl Harbour in *From Here to Eternity*.

The search begins—Novotna at the UNRRA headquarters. Here is Aline MacMahon as Mrs. Mallory, the careworn directress of this outpost of destitute youngsters. Her uniform somehow enhances a warm, matriarchal sympathy, and although she is only a secondary figure, one is curious to know more about her. This is MacMahon's forte, to make everything she does stick in the memory. She brings a nobility to this part, a kind of native sagacity that lingered in my childhood impressions of her as one of the sharp-tongued, brittle *Gold-Diggers of 1933*. (I clearly recall my surprise and fascination on hearing this most distinguished of the Depression Dames sing "Remember my Forgotten Man.") Novotna and MacMahon stop a little Jewish boy who is fighting with some other children. "These groups from Palestine are very closely knit," MacMahon explains, "they haven't accepted him yet." Although *The Search* maintains its documentary flavour by putting in such statements as this, it is all just a little less effective than in 1948. The perspective of

time has deepened the bitter taste of the plot.

Karel's conscious reawakening to things past is hastily brought on by the sudden arrival of Corey's wife and son from America. These two characters seem remarkably vivid and unsympathetic (unintentionally, I am sure). The son establishes himself as a fairly terrifying smart-aleck, with only a few lines of dialogue—the brief sequence in which the two boys meet is another of those "symbolic visualization" bits, where actually the two cultures are placed side by side with shocking contrast. The wife is attractive, unobtrusive, steeped in the polite child-psychology of suburbia. It is precisely the viewer's sympathy with Karel that casts an unlovely light upon this harmless American mother and son. The outcome of Karel's encounter with these people brings out a very striking thing. He runs away, out to the night-time city, out into Berlin, trying to rediscover newer meanings of life—to look for his mother. By his own bewilderment he is forced to run away from that world of half-understood American soldiers and their families. He sees the half-illuminated ruins of the city, cabaret lights and music, a partially distorted glimpse of the post-war German city, a furtive camera glance through a lost child's eyes.

I am reminded here of a similarity in technique between Karel's night wandering through Berlin and other nocturnal soul-searchings enacted by leading characters in Zinnemann's films. Julie Harris's escape into the sultry, tawdry southern town in *Member of the Wedding*, Van Heflin's flight into the city in *Act of Violence*, Marlon Brando's violent encounter with civilians in *The Men*, Clift's headlong death-run into the Honolulu night as the sirens screech in *From Here to Eternity*—this is an effect that Zinnemann uses well. Isolating a person from his ordinary environment, throwing him into a city by night, a city unable to be understood in quite the same way by day, offers innumerable chances for cameraman and director to exercise their poetic vision of character and background. In *The Search* the cameraman gets the chance—but, in essence, the Zinnemann touch is here, and I can imagine that the locale certainly tempted the director to show us a tipsy young G.I. in the cabaret looking like Dickie Moore, or, in a quiet bistro just off the Wilhelmstrasse, a Mary Astor-like lady sipping beer with just the proper touch of weary élan.

But Karel's search is that of a child for his mother; and



"Rare human blends of military personality—a far cry from Zinnemann's soldiery of Pearl Harbour in 'From Here to Eternity'."



the camera moves to a shot of factory women marching dejectedly to work, carrying lunch pails. Watching them through a high wire fence (a child's recollection of Auschwitz), Karel dimly recalls his previous experience of seeing his mother separated from him in the concentration camp. He wanders all night, and is finally reunited with Steve. As he rushes to embrace him, music almost ruins the scene. Then, by a river, the two discuss Karel's mother; it is a pastoral scene of reassurance, not completely satisfactory—but its brevity, pleasing photography, and Clift's sensitive underplaying help the sequence to attain a level of simple symbolism—the soldier as post-war hero, his arm of comfort about the refugee child's shoulder. It is the way we all hope that it really was, and is, today . . .

When Steve takes Karel to the UNRRA camp, a group of children are assembled, off to Palestine—and, oddly enough, they are all singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in Hebrew as they march off with knapsacks over their shoulders, full of hope. Mrs. Malik waves to them from the window—later, a sad farewell to Mrs. Mallory before the mother begins her search for Karel again. The old suspense-last-minute-near-miss reunion brings the film to its final scenes. Novotna, on the train, sees a new group of arrivals, bedraggled and footsore children, disembarking for the UNRRA camp. The faces that she sees are of all Europe; she gets off the train, and Mrs. Mallory calls to her. ("Do you want to know why I'm here?" the mother asks, then looks at the children. "For them!") The wise Mrs. Mallory knows that Karel is at the camp, and in a matter of minutes here is Steve telling the boy to join a group of children who are filing past Mrs. Malik. The mother catches a glimpse of him, and, half-disbelieving, they fall into each other's embrace, the boy mumbling "Mother." In spite of the contrivances that have gone before, it is still most poignant.

## II

Frank Stauffacher is introducing Fred Zinnemann now. The director is sitting down over on the left of the auditorium, his head lowered, looking at his hands. Resounding applause greets him and continues even as he stands, then leans upon the rostrum—a little embarrassed, I think. He does not have an accent; or, at least, it is barely discernible. Someone had told me his English was almost unintelligible, but it is flawless. He seems calm, but there is a tenseness somewhere, probably because he is pressed for time—he has to catch a plane at midnight, we've been told, and it is almost eleven now. No one is asking any question, and suddenly we are embarrassed. There is a determined look about Zinnemann's face, darkly tanned, and his eyes look questioningly into the auditorium.

"Well, are there any questions?" Still nothing but murmurs—could it be the effect of the picture, or is it Zinnemann's appearance that has made everyone tongue-tied? Then, at last, someone asks:

Q: "What is the chief obstacle, or frustration, of a director trying to make a good picture?"

A: "Well, I would say it's mainly the question of getting a good story." (Zinnemann pauses for a moment, then smiles.) "It's difficult to get good stories nowadays." (Laughter.)

Q: "What are the difficulties in getting a picture started?"

A: "With all the new processes being developed today in the industry, there are tremendous problems created in terms of set-building. . . ." (He goes on to explain the needs created by wide-screen and Cinerama: audiences want to "see more." He mentions "Oklahoma," his current production, filmed in a new process called Todd A-O.) "It's something like Cinerama, only we're trying to think of a way to get that panelled effect of three screens out of it. Since most of *Oklahoma* is being

shot on location, I've tried to make settings and atmosphere show to best advantage in this new process. New processes create new problems, not only in photographic effects, but also directorial procedure, choreography, and so on."

Q: "How did the score for *The Search* come about? How can a director get to select a particular score or composer?"

A: It varies. The best position for a director in such a case is to be producer and director, and then you can control your musical score. . . . But most directors are given quite a lot of leeway. I thought this was a very fine score in this picture." (*The interrogator agreed.*) "A Swiss composer superimposed the score after the picture was made."

Q: "What kind of pictures do you like to do?"

A: "A director should do what he is excited about. I always think of a saying of Sam Goldwyn's about his pictures, and that is: 'I don't care whether it makes money or not, but I hope everybody in America wants to see it.' In *The Search*, the original idea was to do a film about displaced children—Weschler and I got permission to go to Germany to do so. . . . We had no idea of how to start. We went around and carefully gathered material, and a framework was suggested—the idea of a mother searching for her son, and incidents were selected to fit this framework in the best cinematic way. . . ."

Q: "What do you think of film censorship?"

A: "I feel that a Production Code is very important in this country, where certain pictures can be seen by children. The people (*the censorship boards*) are very intelligent and co-operative, I think."

Q: "What about the narration at the beginning of *The Search*? And who did the photography?"

A: "The narration was put in rather hastily—we found it unnecessary later, but couldn't take it out again for technical reasons. . . . The cameraman was Emil Berner, one of the finest in Europe—he spent all his life making pictures under rather primitive conditions in Zurich, but in spite of this he did very wonderful work."

Q: "What happened to Ivan Jandl?"

A: "He is now in Czechoslovakia, and since that country is behind the Iron Curtain, I haven't heard from him. He's now in Prague, I think, and writes only occasionally. I used to get letters from him pretty regularly—I did get a Christmas card last year, I think. He should be about sixteen now. He wanted to be an engineer, not an actor. . . . I worked with him through an interpreter."

Q: "With regard to Lillian Ross's book, *Picture*, how true is her work in describing the problems of the director?"

A: "Miss Ross was very clever at slandering."

(Continued on page 110)



Fred Zinnemann and Mary Astor, on the set of "Act of Violence."



# The Painter Reveron

LOTTE H. EISNER

RECENTLY we have had a great many (even too many) films about artists and their work, of which the majority have served simply as a kind of popular digest, a more or less fortuitous sequence of lantern slides, linked together by a commentary too often otiose. The method of filmmakers with true intuition and sensibility, like Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras—whose films on Giotto and Bosch discovered the possibilities of treating a picture like a scene in a studio without the element of the third dimension—has now become stale with imitation and abuse. It is rare that a director succeeds in creating a personal, dramatic rhythm from his material, like Emmer and Gras, and like Alain Resnais in his *Guernica*, where each image was like a cry, and the sudden swooping camera movements interpreted Picasso's apocalyptic vision. With a more expansive approach, paintings have also been successfully used to evoke the manners and customs of a past epoch: William Novik's graceful *Images Médiévales*, with its fascinating glimpses of life in the Middle Ages, and the delicious *Les Charmes de l'Existence*, by Jean Grémillon and Pierre Kast, in which the too smooth, too dimpled, too plump bodies of models of the "Salon" period were fused into a kind of bucolic idyll.

Most recent of all has been the development of films in which the works are allowed to speak for themselves; their formal expressiveness is studied in detail, close-ups reveal the intricacies of their texture, their roughnesses and irregularities, their sculptural qualities and the play of light on their polished surfaces. These are the films on masks and African figurines, demon figures of early

American, Mayan and Aztec sculptures, which are revolved, slowly, in front of the camera, so that they become strangely threatening. In this group one finds the beautiful *Turay*, made by Enrico Gras in Argentina. This is a kind of incantation on the old sacred potteries of Chaco, potteries on which the half-human, half-animal faces seem hardly to be drawn at all; weeping eyes, sharp owl-beaks, sinuous serpent bodies are the haunting themes of this hymn to incestuous love.

*The Painter Reveron*, a film made in Venezuela by an unusually gifted young director, Margot Benacerraf, to some extent approaches the haunting quality of *Turay*. It is an art film built entirely round the atmosphere, the obsession of this strange and rather mad painter's surroundings. The warm tropical thickness that envelops him explains the man and his work. Reveron began as an impressionist, as can be seen from his early pictures with their thickly plastered colours (this black-and-white film seems full of colour); then, when he withdrew from city life to a sun-drenched beach, where the palms cast thin shadows, the bright light dazzled and blinded him, his paintings became blurred, softer. In doing so, they gained in mystery, their outlines disappeared under the *sfumato*, a kind of mist which sifts and diffuses their bright colours. The paintings of Reveron's old age remind one of those stains on wall or ceiling in which the eye seems to discern fantastic shapes and faces.

Slowly, delightedly, the camera explores the strange home of this strange artist, a house that seems half bamboo and bark hut, unexpectedly vast, and half roughstone palace, like the one built by Cheval, the postman, which Brunius showed in his film *Violons d'Ingres (Hobbies)*. Shadow stings and stabs at this strange place; a plump-limbed native woman sleeps in a hammock with the animal sleep of people in hot countries, where a heavy siesta is the only answer to dull noonday hours. And this woman is hardly distinguishable from all the peculiar dolls that Reveron has himself made from any materials which came to hand—tatters of cloth, old rope, sawdust; oddly sensuous and equivocal creatures who seem to stare without really looking at you, with their great glass eyes, and thick lips set a little askew in swollen, triangular, cacao-pod faces. They are thrown here and there on benches and cushions, contorted puppets; or they swing, like Bluebeard's hanged wives, from the ceiling. Living corpses, puppet phantoms in the obscure and oppressive light of this hallucinating place, they swing silently, suddenly move towards the spectator and seem about to burst through the screen. Turning faster and faster, they







drop with the same heavy thud as a sack of flour. The turmoil of these grimacing, hanging women—which serve Reveron as models for his portraits, nude or in old-

fashioned costumes, collapsed heavily upon cushions—the music of Guy Bernard punctuates with cries and piercing shrieks, fragments of exotic sounds and chants, tom-toms. Sometimes, too, the master paints his own portrait, reflected in innumerable mirrors—and, with his bearded face, he looks something like the aged Tolstoy. Then one can hardly distinguish, among these pictures of a bewitched world worthy of Goya, between the actual image of the painter at work and his form as reflected in a mirror. . . .

Reveron, however, is no Goya; his curious art seems nearer to that of a lesser talent, James Ensor. Whatever he is, no film-maker has so deeply penetrated the work of an artist in a film as Margot Benacerraf. We are shown the immediacy of the moment of creation, taken alive; an astounding presence is revealed, stripped naked in all its complexity. Yet this is not due solely to the subject, so naturally spell-binding, for the director knows how to *see*, she has an innate sense of rhythm and montage. One hopes she will make films in other Latin-American countries, strange lands in which the baroque of Catholic cathedrals mingles with the mysteries of an Indian culture, violent and strong, not yet submerged by European invaders.

## Book Reviews

### **A GRAMMAR OF THE FILM, by Raymond Spottiswoode. Illustrated. (Faber and Faber, 18s.)**

According to the preface to this second edition, demand for *A Grammar of the Film* has continued through the years since its publication in 1935; this is inexplicable. The book is extremely difficult to get through, not because it's profound but because it's so dreadfully dull. Under the guise of clarification, simple matters are made complex, and there is so much explication of terms that one would think film a linguistic exercise.

Surely it is possible to understand a movie without going through this sort of training in appreciation:—

“By successive doses, the tyro can gradually assimilate nearly as much as the connoisseur; but to successive applications of the film there will accrue successively smaller rewards, until finally the dissatisfaction of going to see it, and looking at what was already known, exactly balances the satisfaction of completing the remaining montages and observing the remaining relations between the differentiating factors. This is the optimum point for deciding not to see the film again; but it is improbable that an exact balance will be struck, owing to the impossibility of applying the whole film to the spectator in infinitesimal doses.

“If a film is looked at in this way, it is probably immaterial how it is appreciated; that is to say, at the first seeing attention may be concentrated on the theme; at the second on the technical ability of the acting; at the third on the various montages, and so on; or, on the other hand, it may be distributed in varying proportions over all these at each seeing. If the first method is pursued, the aspects successively apprehended will be

related to one another to form an appraisal of the film as a whole; like a crystal built up facet by facet, whose interior construction is appreciated before its wholeness is revealed. This whole or unity is in the film the determinant of the multitude of variables which the director controls, and without which the unity would not exist; and whereas it is the last stage to be reached by the first method, it is the starting point of the second. In this case, the film as a whole, which is enriched with every extra seeing up to the point of equilibrium, resembles a fully-grown crystal under a microscope, which reveals a different set of facets when regarded from every possible aspect.

“A special case of the second method of appreciation is uniquely the best when a film can only be seen once, and probably the best when it can only be seen a less than optimum number of times. Here it will be advisable to press forward attention and assimilation along every line until the return to them is equal at the margin. The reason for this procedure is easily seen. It depends on two assumptions: first, that the powers of receptivity of the spectator are limited . . . second, that successive doses of attention to a single factor will be diminishingly rewarded. . . . If, then, the equi-marginal condition is not fulfilled, it will be profitable to transfer some of the attention from factors which are being rewarded with less to those which are meeting with more satisfaction at the margin. This process will be continued until no further substitution brings about any increase of satisfaction; and at this point rewards at the margin will be equal.”

This is the way pedants destroy interest in music or poetry or painting; is it necessary similarly to paralyse responses to film? It would be better for movies to remain a Saturday afternoon vice for children (one *enjoys* vices) than to be made academically respectable and joyless by textbooks like this.

It shows, I suppose, extraordinary character that the author did not revise the book for this new edition: ordinary, vain authors might have been tempted to erase some of the more embarrassing prognostications and wipe off a bit of dust here or there. Spottiswoode was right not to tamper with it. Suppose he had brought it up to date; what would we have? A systematic body of some recent commonplaces. Those who want a textbook on films will probably do just as well with an outmoded one: the classic confusions of film theory are here presented as well as anywhere.

Spottiswoode's theory of montage is derived, he tells us, from the theories of Eisenstein, and thus from the dialectics



of Marx and Hegel—a statement which is supported by Mr. Spottiswoode's Hegelian prose. "... The marked distinctions between shot and shot, cut and cut, sight and its coincident sound, idea and idea as they are generated parallel within the mind, or are opposed to some permanent part of its armoury of concepts, provide opportunities for montage, which is harsh and crude the more violent the collision, and subtle and penetrating the narrower and finer the distinction." "... Montage, therefore, is the mechanism of an obliquity apparent in the smaller facets as well as the larger aspects of a film; and it is in connection with obliquity that film technique and personal subject must here be shown to coincide. . . ."

A few hundred pages of this sort may easily convince a student that film art is beyond his powers of comprehension. If he has some spark of interest left when he finishes the text, he can apply himself to the appended chart—which is the final dampener.

There is a bright side, of course: after several hours with the book, a movie will look better than ever.

PAULINE KAEI.

### THE FILM AND THE PUBLIC, by Roger Manvell. Illustrated. (Penguin Books, 3s. 6d.)

The publishers claim that Dr. Manvell's new book adopts a completely different approach to its subject from that of his earlier *Film*. It is certainly a good deal less lively, giving the impression that its author has become, in the intervening years, less immediately interested in films and film people. The book is divided into an outline of cinema history from the silent days, accounts of 23 films ranging from *Siegfried* to *Umberto D*, a description of the structure of the industry, an analysis of the social implications of the cinema, a section on television, and (the most useful part of the book) lists of important films, film-makers and books.

Dr. Manvell's writing seems to be based on a desire to be unprovocative at all costs. He says all the right things about the right films. While advocating freedom for the artist, he endorses Louis B. Mayer's view of the problem ("*You want other people to starve for your art!*") to the extent of quoting it twice. Dr. Manvell seems in fact to be slightly on the side of the moguls. Referring to Lillian Ross's book, *Picture*, he says that the cuts and compromises involved in getting *The Red Badge of Courage* before the public were "*a lesson to all film-makers, all film critics, all film enthusiasts, addicts, and supporters of art!*"; adding, to prove that he is not being ironical, that the ordeal of Gottfried Reinhardt "*is not a picture of illiteracy or of timidity. It is an analysis of the kinds of technical and artistic compromise which become necessary when large sums of money are invested in entertaining large masses of people.*" Except for such equivocal moments, Dr. Manvell seems bent on pleasing all the people all the time. His readers, however, may be fatigued by an obviousness that verges on the tautological in his writing. He is incorrigibly sound in his judgments, underlining "this effect with a grave pre-contemporary critical lingo that is sometimes extremely clumsy ("*Celia Johnson . . . looks quite ordinary until it is time for her to look like what she feels!*"). There are 16 pages of stills.

JOHN WILCOX.

### GARBO, by John Bainbridge. Illustrated. (Frederick Muller, 16s.)

Garbo has made only one claim upon her public—to be left in peace—and in asking that she has, of course, asked the impossible. Even if it was initially the move of a smart publicist that transformed the star once gaily known as "the pet of the publicity department" into the elusive, aloof and enigmatic Garbo, the element of mystery has become an integral part of her legend. Any mystery invites a solution; and it is an infinite curiosity that in part explains Garbo's persistent and undiminished news-value, and the fact that the legend has taken on, in effect, an existence almost independent of her actual screen performances. John Bainbridge's biography is the latest, and probably the most discerning, of the many attempts to confront in print the woman he describes, in an unusually expansive moment, as "one of the great ornaments and excitements of her age . . . an idea, a dream, shadow, substance and mystery." Generally, he leaves such flourishes

to the critics from whom, not without a certain malice, he extensively quotes. In manner, his book somewhat resembles an extended *New Yorker* profile: thorough, smoothly readable, and suggesting an enthusiasm tempered by scepticism.

Descended from six generations of farmers, Garbo began her working career as a "soap-lather girl" in a barber's shop, moved on to serve in a large store, appeared, chewing buns, in a publicity film advertising a Stockholm bakery, and had her first professional screen part as a bathing beauty in a Mack Sennett-type comedy. Leaving the store, she gave firmly as her reason: "To enter the films." From stagestruck shop girl, through the encounter with Mauritz Stiller (inevitably described as playing Svengali to Garbo's Trilby), to Hollywood and the years of triumphant stardom, Mr. Bainbridge pursues the story with an assiduous and sometimes illuminating concern for detail. He informs us that at one time Garbo's favourite bedside book was "Peter Rabbit" (adding, with rather unnecessary pomposity, that "this choice of reading matter would not necessarily be regarded as extraordinary by literary people, for "Peter Rabbit" is considered by many English critics to be stylistically and in the realm of fantasy second to "Alice in Wonderland"); he records the pathetic, serio-comic flights from Press and public (after one brisk chase around Central Park, Garbo faced her relentless pursuers with a melancholy, "I feel so sorry for you. You have such a tough job."); he quotes her early appeal to her Hollywood employers to be let off playing "any more bad womens," and a later and more considered judgment, "It is difficult in Hollywood to be allowed to try anything. It's all a terrible compromise." He also preserves Alice B. Toklas' superb description of Garbo as "Mademoiselle Hamlet" and Cecil Beaton's disenchanted, "perhaps her magic is only a freak of nature which leads our imagination to make of her an ideal she can never be." Possibly, though, the most perceptive quotation in the book is one that has nothing directly to do with Garbo: "Her character was simply to hold you by the particular spell; any other—the good nature of home, the relation to her mother, her friends, her lovers, her debts, the practice of virtues or industries or vices—was not worth speaking of. They were the fictions and shows; the representation was the deep substance." It is taken from Henry James' "The Tragic Muse," and perhaps it says all that, ultimately, needs saying.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

## PERIODICALS

**CINEMAGES.** Published by the Group for Film Study Inc., 3951 Gouverneur Avenue, New York 63. Editor: Gideon Bachman. Annual Subscription (about 7 issues): \$3.00.

This new publication, sponsored by the New York Group for Film Study, which also arranges screenings, is described by its editor as a periodical "of record, devoted to production notes, filmographies, factual data and bibliographies, as well as interviews with film personalities, research material and film notes." Issues vary from 50 to 100 roneoed pages, richly packed with scholarship and discovery and all the signs of passionate enthusiasm.

No. 1 contained, notably, a filmography of Luis Bunuel, with some highly discerning notes and appraisals by Gideon Bachman, Dali's accounts of the making of *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or*, and Henry Miller's appreciation of the latter. The second issue was devoted to Jean Epstein, with tributes by Jean Benoît-Levy, Cocteau, Gance, Henri Langlois, Hans Richter and others, and the third to a wholly fascinating exploration of G. W. Pabst. For this a kind of *Citizen Kane* approach was used—a series of interviews with people who had collaborated with Pabst, including Leo Lania, who scripted *Dreigroschenoper* (and the recent *Der Letzte Akt*), Eugen Schufftan, who photographed several of the French films, Paul Falkenberg and Marc Sorkin, his assistants on *Crisis*, *Lulu*, *Jeanne Ney*, *Westfront* and others. The result is a series of engrossing glimpses with one of the most elusive of directors.

The most recent numbers of *Cinemages* have included discussions on Malaparte's *Il Cristo Proibito* and Dreyer's *Vampyr* (No. 4) and an inquiry into the "Dawn of the American Screen" (No. 5), annotating the period from 1893-1916, with articles on Ince, Porter and the early Griffith and studies of



many films and personalities of the period.

All this cannot be too highly recommended. *Cinemages* is not only far and away the best American film periodical, but one of the best in the world. A year's subscription costs \$3.00, and back numbers are still available.

**LE CINEMA JAPONAIS.** Special issue of *Cinema 55*, published by the Federation Française des Ciné-Clubs, 2 Rue de l'Elysée, Paris 8. 100 frs.

*Cinéma 55*, the review published occasionally by the French Federation of Film Clubs, has recently produced an excellent little survey of the Japanese cinema. While, because of accessibility, Akira Kurosawa takes pride of place with a complete

filmography and a charming personal message in which he dates his interest in the cinema from the time he saw Gance's *La Roue*, there are also some useful thumbnail sketches of ten other leading directors. These include Heinosuke Gosho, who made the wonderful *Four Chimneys*, Kenji Mizoguchi, Teinosuke Kinugasa, and Keisuke Kinoshita, whose *They Were Twelve* was voted the best Japanese film of last year. All this indicates the richness of a national cinema so tantalisingly little-known in the West; and other interesting features are a comparison of Japanese and French criticisms of Autant-Lara's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, a section of statistics, and a list of foreign films selected by Japanese critics as the best of the year from 1931-1954.

## Correspondence

### A Scheme for Amateurs

*The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.*

SIR,—In an industry preoccupied with the terrors of television and the vast expanse of the CinemaScope screen, the role of those who experiment in cinema has been largely lost sight of. For purely economic reasons it is to be expected that experiments are more likely to come from those who have the time to think, to fail, to try again; in a word, the amateur or semi-professional. To the professional film-maker the most costly item is time, to the amateur, film stock. By and large the amateur has all the time in the world, and we must therefore wonder why it is that so little which can be considered to be either experimental or worthwhile in terms of cinema has been forthcoming.

Writing in May, 1953, Denis Forman showed how four-fifths of amateur film-makers were composed of those who, fifty years ago, would have been engaged in fretwork. He went on to show how few there were making films either within the bounds of their resources or their imagination. One thing he missed; he failed to state that, although a few such people existed, they were not receiving any support either by way of critical stimulus or financial return, except from a very small coterie mainly composed of other film-makers.

In a paper which I recently produced, entitled "Aspects of Amateur Film Production," I endeavoured to formulate a scheme whereby the "few" could be introduced to an audience which already existed, and was both large and well informed—large enough to provide a financial return to the producer so that he could continue to produce films, informed enough to be able to provide intelligent criticism which would stimulate the producer to better things.

The crux of my scheme was that the film societies in this country should agree to give a guaranteed showing to certain approved projects. On a basis of 250 societies this would provide a return of £125 for a twenty-minute film. The necessary vetting and approval of the projects would be made by an independent committee.

Thus the film societies would then be able to help in the most practical way possible the formation and growth of a new—for lack of a better word—experimental movement; and the film-makers would be able to plan films for an audience they know and not aimlessly produce films which are immediately relegated to the store cupboard.

The Federation of Film Societies has now given its blessing to this scheme and has said that it will do all it can towards encouraging its members to give the necessary guarantees. The formation of the committee is being proceeded with, and it is hoped to attract some of the more advanced film-makers to submit projects.

Your recent editorials have shown that there are all too few

chances in this country whereby a budding film-maker can exercise his talents, can gain entrance to the studios or even the marble halls of A.C.T. It is axiomatic that without exercising his talents no embryo director or prospective employer can be sure that the talent even exists.

The answer to all this, in my view, is to provide an audience for new talent. We are unlikely to find much sympathy from the professional renter, our only hope is the film society.

The film societies are not yet strong enough to provide the complete answer, which is to give sufficient support to a producing organisation on a full-time basis. In other words, our need is for an Arts Theatre for the cinema.

If there is anyone who would like to know more of my scheme, or believes as I do that the production of worthwhile films by new talent is something to be encouraged, I should be grateful to hear from them.

Yours, etc.,

6 Granley Road,  
Cheltenham.

R. J. HALL.

### "On the Waterfront"

Sir,—Two American comments on *On the Waterfront*: Murray Kempton, labour columnist of the *New York Post*—"The Group Theatre without Moscow." Unidentified longshoreman—"The funniest picture in years."

Sincerely yours,

Curator,

Museum of Modern Art Film Library,  
New York.

RICHARD GRIFFITH.

### "The Wild One"

Sir,—Mr. Gavin Lambert's criticism of *The Wild One* seems to imply that it was effectually banned by the British Board of Film Censors for its violence alone, "Because its acute descriptions of rowdyism may excite adolescents," whom he then appears to equate with "a small criminally-minded minority." But the violence (which is more brutal on the part of the small-town inhabitants) is in itself no worse than that in *On the Waterfront* or *The Big Heat*, so that I should attribute better reasons to the Censors.

The more obvious is the possible effect on road safety. In the U.S.A. the motor-cycle is not a means of transport, as in the main it is in this country, but sports equipment or the common bond of gangs such as the Black Rebels. At present there are few motor-cyclists of this type here: the public showing of *The Wild One* might well increase the number, and cause more deaths on the road.

There is, I believe, another reason. The social problem of *The Wild One* is, at root, the same as the Teddy-Boy problem in this country. This film attempts to show that at least some of the blame must rest with society, that the Teddy-Boy problem—to give it its English name—is a symptom of a wider social malady. In the right circumstances it is worth while to show what it is that a cure must deal with; but in the cinema, where a social conscience is often no more than a sop to the Hays Office, there is a real risk of supplying the hesitant among the "criminally-minded minority" with a specious excuse for hooliganism.

*The Wild One* could scarcely be given a "U" or "A" certificate on account of its violence, while an "X" certificate, with all the aura that meretricious advertisement has given it, would bring in the very people most likely to be harmed by



it. I therefore support the Censors in their decision that the merits of the film do not outweigh the risks of public showing. I hope, however, that the film will not be completely withdrawn from this country. Film societies are in a position to bring it to discriminating film-goers without the risks of public showing, and if copies (35mm. and 16mm.) are available should take the chance.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL L. MORGAN.

Vice President,  
Oxford University Film Society.

GAVIN LAMBERT writes: *Of course the pros and cons of this case are complex. In accusing me of simplifying them, I think Mr. Morgan has misread parts of my review. I didn't, for instance, suggest that violence alone was the reason for the ban, but the light in which it was shown, and the fact that the police were shown as weak and ineffective.*

*And is Mr. Morgan's dread of Teddy-Boys a little exaggerated? "The Wild One" has been publicly shown in the U.S.A., France, Germany and other European countries—does he think, then, our own Teddy-Boys are so much more dangerous than theirs? Nor, incidentally, does it seem likely that the "criminally-minded minority" need bother to find a "specious" excuse for hooliganism. A real one is usually more accessible.*

### Spillane versus Bunuel

Sir,—I am unable to account for the blanket of silence accorded the two films based on stories by Mickey Spillane. The film *Ring of Fear* that starred Clyde Beatty and featured Spillane drew a five-line review in the January-March, 1955, "A Guide to Current Films," yet two films, *I the Jury* and *Kiss Me Deadly*, based on stories by Mickey Spillane, were not even considered worthy of a one-line mention.

I am no devotee of the Spillane case books, for I find that

boredom forces me to lay them down long before the last chapter, yet in spite of the tortured plots of *I the Jury* and *Kiss Me Deadly*, the memory of them stays with me long after the three-starred recommendations of SIGHT AND SOUND have found oblivion with yesteryear's newsreels.

These two films were not the usual blood and bathos of the weekly crime thriller, but essays in the amoral behaviour of a small section of the contemporary society. They posed no question of good and evil, for they ignored the *mores* that civilised man seeks to protect himself with and showed people who openly and without hypocrisy jettisoned honour, friendship and loyalty for self-survival.

That *I the Jury* died half-way through the showing I would not for one moment deny, yet one still stayed until the final scene. This was a film that caught the claustrophobic horror of slatternly buildings, a film completely nihilistic and without hero or villain, only characters who lived and died, not in defiance of authority but completely indifferent to it.

We have just sat through a season of Luis Bunuel and how we drooled at the contrived situations and the oh so obvious sexual symbols that popped up at regular intervals, the pantomime cruelties and the cute finales, yet with what intellectual snobbery we ignored two films that made much of Bunuel look like a boy's "blood."

Who knows, twenty years from now we may be queueing along the Bank to see these two films, supported by a short programme of primitive Chaplins, with a programme note to explain the finer points to the younger members of the audience. But it will contain no contemporary review from SIGHT AND SOUND, for the critics of that glossy period magazine were busy at the time chasing celluloid soap operas and the avant-gardery of their diaper period, or perhaps there was no special Press show.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR MOYSE.

39 Minford Gardens,  
West Kensington, W.14.

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(MORE LIGHT, continued from page 75)

The artist has a great duty to the human face and if he cannot bring to the fore its native dignity, he should at least conceal its shallowness and stupidity—though it is possible that no human being is either stupid or shallow but appears to be so only because it is ill at ease and has not found that corner of its world in which it can be comfortable.

Monstrously enlarged as it is on the screen, the human face must be treated like a landscape and invested with the relief of light and the retreat of shadow. It is to be viewed as if the eyes were lakes, the nose a mountain, the cheeks broad meadows, the mouth a flower patch, the forehead sky, and the hair a cloud.

Color values must be altered as in an actual landscape by the added use of light, filter and manipulation of that which absorbs too much light. Just as I spray trees with aluminium to give life to the blunt green, just as one filters the sky to reduce its whiteness, just as the camera is pointed to catch a reflection on the surface of a lake, just so must the face be viewed to contain the elements that form its chiaroscuro. The skin should reflect and not blot light, and the lights are to be used to caress, not to wipe out, what they strike.

If it is impossible to raise the quality of the subject's face by placing deep shadows into the eyes, it is better to obliterate it in merciful darkness and to have the human face be no more, and no less, than an active pattern in the photographic scale.

When the face is photographed, the result is strongly affected by everything that is visible in the same frame. When I light a face I first light the background and fill my frame with light values that point to the face. The figure too should meet with no other measure, and a walk or its movement through a space should be made into an encounter with light.

But whether face, a letter, a toy balloon, or a street, the problem is always the same—lifeless surfaces should be relentlessly treated to take light, and over-brilliant and flaring surfaces must be reduced to their order: shadows must avoid

duplication, and the vitality of the general pattern concentrate toward its chief interest.

Wherever possible in dealing with black and white photography, all colors should be avoided as they provoke bad judgment. My sets and costumes are normally designed in black and white, and where light is difficult to use without exact control I spray black and white paint on anything that is before my camera. The superb virtue of black and white photography is that it automatically makes all color values unreal and changes them to an orderly scale.

Color photography can be of no value, beyond its novelty, until the artist uses unreal and unnaturalistic color on face, costume and background alike and orders each scene into a unit of the entire. The tints now in use in films are no superior to the hand-colored photographs which have been a horror for fifty years.

The value of color is determined by the value of the artist who uses it. There are many great painters alive who excel in the use of color. I am not informed as to the exact time Henri Matisse needed to determine the color he used in a single canvas, but it must be considerably longer than the time used that determines the colors that are poured into our "super" features. W. C. Fields' classic: "Double superlative! Can you handle it?" has so far been answered by the film with quite a firm "No."

When I took Karl Vollmoeller to a much-vaunted film in color he expressed judgment tersely by saying: "It would have been bad even without color."

Until the able color artists enter our menagerie, its chief asset will remain the great use of black and white, its numberless combinations, extensive range and variation, and the dramatic relation of one to the other. A shaft of white light properly used can be more effective than all the color in the world badly used. More than that—with light and an empty canvas and a few ridiculous properties one can produce a landscape that is superior in beauty to most landscapes provided even by nature, unless nature also genially provides, which it rarely does, the proper light to record its bounty.



Even then one must use gauze and filter, and the proper lens—controlled exposure, precise shutter, skilful focus and—a point of vantage often impossible to obtain.

But, you see, there is no wholesale judicial committee in dealing with the elements used in art. Each one according to his measure dominates the final result. The slightest detail is influenced by the slightest idea, grandeur or pettiness is revealed—each idea is sifted—through each thought of the artist, and the mentality of the man at work becomes fully apparent in every move.

Of all our problems the simplest is the one of composition. Though it is a fluid one and aligned with the problem of light, it is easily perceived. In its finest sense film composition shifts constantly with each image in motion, and every frame of our work should relate to the sum total.

But above all—the greatest art in motion picture photography is to be able to give life to the dead space that exists between lens and subject. Smoke, rain, snow, fog, dust and steam can emotionalize dead space—so can the movement of the camera. The camera can advance and retreat with or against the action it photographs—it can expose in every second an orderly and rich pictorial progression. (This does not mean movement for the sake of motion, which one can often see in the labour of those who come to our work from the theatre and are excited by the discovery that the audience can be made dizzy. The movement of the camera should be made to subscribe to the rhythmic conception of the entire work.) The camera can release by virtue of its motion a dynamic force which will give the perfect motion picture its ultimate rating and will remove it finally from the stigma of being what it so often attempts to be at present: a subsidiary of other arts which can be used more powerfully.

Were I to instruct others how to use the camera, the first step would be either to project a film upside down or to have the film viewed so long until the actors and the story made the students yawn, if they failed to do so immediately. To eliminate the factors which do not contribute to the study of the camera is very difficult as the untrained eye is apt to confuse the reason for the faults and the virtues of the camera. (Note to the universities of the future: The camera collects all faults and virtues but does not produce them all.)

The speed with which the eye can absorb visual information must also be learned. The motion picture camera has specific effects that must be mastered. Slow motion can seem swift in interest and quick motion can appear to be never-endingly dull. The motion picture camera has no limits that circumscribe its artistic functions—its limits are—if any, the limits of the human eye.

Its greatest asset—superb and unique—is motion, not only outwardly visible but inwardly concealed and felt; and in order to master the laws of motion one must first master pause and rhythm. In other words: the laws of art—and the lawlessness of it, too.

("More Light" is a chapter from a forthcoming book by Mr. von Sternberg.)

(THE TENTH MUSE, continued from page 104)

Q: "What do you think of the public reaction toward CinemaScope?"

A: "I believe the American public is maturing very rapidly." (Laughter.) "I think the wide screen will help tremendously with *Oklahoma*. . . . There was at the time, I remember, some question as to whether *From Here to Eternity* should be in Technicolor or black and white. . . . It might be of some interest to know that we rehearsed the entire film in detail with props and so on before shooting started. We found that it adds to spontaneity and saves time. The picture was shot in 41 days—and we split it by taking two of the leading actors each day and doing their whole story. (*Clift and Donna Reed, Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr, the Sinatra sequences*.) And it gave each of them a sense of continuity."

Q: "How closely does the writer and photographer work with the director?"

A: "The writer makes his greatest contribution at the beginning of the picture—my function is to translate the treatment into visual terms. I work very closely with the writer. . . . *High Noon* was mainly edited by Stanley Kramer. . . . The cameraman is the director's right arm on the set, but the director finally decides on the camera movement. . . ."

And it is time for Mr. Zinnemann to go. A wellspring of applause, he says, "Thank you and goodnight," before leaving the platform, and dashes out. I caught a glimpse of him hastily straightening his blue tie, which had been askew all evening. I wish he had given a talk before the film. I feel that he has gone with too much left unsaid; the difficulty of asking rapid-fire questions of an admired director strikes me, but I still have a sense of caution, even of evasiveness in the replies. I imagine Mr. Zinnemann on his plane, trying to think of some way for Laurie or Ado Annie to run off into the night desolation of Oklahoma City, in the wide expansiveness of Todd A-O, with tinkling bar-room pianos and Agnes de Mille dancers twirling. . . .

While, in San Francisco tonight, I shall walk past a little bar near the Museum and peek through the window, and, as usual, not behold anyone who remotely resembles Mary Astor.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *It's Always Fair Weather, The Search, Act of Violence*.  
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20th CENTURY-FOX for *The Virgin Queen, Manhunt*.  
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SOVIET FILM AGENCY for *Romeo and Juliet*.  
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BAUER FILMS for *Herr Puntila and Sein Knecht Matti*.  
DAIEI for *Ugetsu Monogatari, Sansho Dayu, Yukihi*.  
SHIN TOHO for *The Life of O-Haru*.

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